
TEMPLE OF THE JEDI ORDER

2015



CONTENTS

JEDIISM - A 21ST CENTURY PARADIGM	2
BECOMING A JEDI	3
DOCTRINE	4
STUDY AND QUALIFICATIONS	11
JEDI RANKING	14
JEDI OATHS	16
COUNCIL	19
CLERGY	20
SYNOD	23
LITURGY	24
KNIGHTHOOD CEREMONY	27
CLERICAL PROMOTION CEREMONY	30
SELECTED SERMONS	34
SELECTED ARTICLES	102
MEDIA PUBLICATIONS	123

This work has been created by the Jedi of the Temple of the Jedi Order (TotJO), a non-profit organisation founded in 2005 in the US state of Texas and which was one of the first legally recognised Jedi Churches. The Temple's goal is to provide a friendly community to promote virtues such as compassion, understanding, and acceptance by recognising the inherent value of all life and the universality of the Force.

As TotJO grew over the years, a document entitled "The Way of Jediism" was created in 2010 which collated a lot of information about the Temple's practices and beliefs into a single document. There have been numerous changes since 2010 when "The Way of Jediism" was first written, such that a new document was warranted reflecting the changes in the years since the original publishing. It would also provide a comprehensive work that could introduce and teach Jedi and non-Jedi alike how this particular Jedi Temple operated and taught its members.

There is no one Way of Jediism, there are only many ways. In light of this, the original title has been altered to reflect what the work is: a snapshot of the TotJO up to the end of the year 2015. The aim is to release a new version every couple of years providing an evolving picture of the Temple's nature.

JEDIISM - A 21ST CENTURY PARADIGM

Jediism is a religion based on the observance of the Force, a ubiquitous and metaphysical power that a Jedi (a follower of Jediism) believes to be the underlying, fundamental nature of the universe. Jediism finds its roots in philosophies similar to those which inspired the epic space opera “Star Wars”. Jediism is a religion in and of itself and as real as those who practise it.

The Jedi religion is an inspiration and a way of life for many people throughout the world who take on the mantle of Jedi. Jedi apply the principles, ideals, philosophies and teachings of Jediism in a practical manner within their lives.

Real Jedi do not worship George Lucas or Star Wars or anything of the sort. Jediism is not based in fiction, but we accept myth as a sometimes more practical mean of conveying philosophies applicable to real life.

Jedi recognise every human shares the common experience of being alive, with all the benefits, problems, limitations and variations that go along with it. Jedi recognise too the shared experience of existing in an environment with not only our own species but all those others we share this world with.

Jedi believe in the personal value of the individual within the ultimate value of the universal. It is humanistic approach to ethics centred in respect, compassion, empathy, understanding and individual freedom within the context of a metaphysical understanding of the Oneness of reality and the universe in which we emerge from and ultimately return to.

Many come to Jedi are attracted to Jediism because of our acceptance of different people’s interpretation of spirituality while providing the structure of a community which does not feel constrictive, limiting or judgemental of difference. Jediism is a new religious movement being brought about from the ground-up rather than being imposed institutionally from the top-down. As a religious movement, Jediism is grounded in an entirely human response to the mysteries of being, rather than from instruction from some figure claiming ultimate spiritual authority. Cultural changes, such as the rise in individual expression and the expansion of our moral community to the global scale, has provided the perfect opportunity for the emergence of religious movements such as Jediism which combines individuality with communal responsibility.

BECOMING A JEDI

Becoming a Jedi can be a long and challenging process, but also one which can be wonderfully profound and enjoyable. There are a plethora of different interpretations and beliefs which make up one's spiritual journey as a Jedi, and at the Temple these variations of the Jedi path are equally respected within the common and shared beliefs and principles outline below in our Doctrine.

Becoming a Jedi should free you to explore what makes you feel like a more complete person, away from expectations and judgements about who you are or should be. It should go hand in hand with becoming the person you wish to be, in a supportive and caring environment in which you feel safe openly expressing yourself.

Not everyone considers being a Jedi a religious undertaking, for some it is philosophical dedication. There are some for whom being a Jedi is about moving into a new religious life. Perhaps because they have become disillusioned with "traditional" religious institutions that often have difficulty adapting their teachings to a modernising social environment.

To become an official member of the Temple of the Jedi Order you need to complete a membership application which registers you as a member of our non-profit organisation and which can be found on our website: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/jediapplication>

Once that is done new members are encouraged to introduce themselves to everyone and, if they wish to further their understanding of our Doctrine and teachings, begin the Initiate Programme (IP) which gives people an introduction into Jedi philosophy, spirituality, ethics and metaphysical belief.

The doctrine is ideally suited to those who also hold other religious and philosophical convictions. There are Jedi who identify as Christian or Pagan and so on; all are equally welcome to be members of the Temple's community. The Doctrine is loose enough to allow for individual interpretation, while being coherent enough to allow those with different interpretations to share a like-minded community.

DOCTRINE

The doctrine of Temple of the Jedi Order is laid out below and consists of several inter-related areas of belief: a general statement of what Jedi here believe, three tenets which Jedi here utilise and cultivate, a Code which many use as a kind of mantra, a Creed which lays out the goals of a Jedi's actions, 16 Teachings which cover a wide range of ethical and spiritual issues, and 21 short Maxims which cover a wide range of traits of one's character.

The majority of the Doctrine is about right practice (orthopraxy) rather than right belief (orthodoxy). A Jedi's character is measured most by their deeds, but orthopraxy and orthodoxy are equally important for a Jedi to cultivate. Because of this emphasis on right action, many people with varied religious (or non-religious) backgrounds find that they are in broad agreement with the Doctrine. Many people find that they are able to easily integrate Jediism into their previous spirituality allowing for people to consider themselves perhaps as "Christian Jedi" or "Buddhist Jedi" etc.

Broadly speaking, the Doctrine brings together the metaphysical idea of "Oneness" (via the Force) and combines it with the subjective experience of being a human amongst humans. The Doctrine combines the ethical considerations of living in a society with the spiritual considerations of also living in a shared and connected environment.

Jedi Believe

- In the Force, and in the inherent worth of all life within it.
- In the sanctity of the human person. We oppose the use of torture and cruel or unusual punishment, including the death penalty.
- In a society governed by laws grounded in reason and compassion, not in fear or prejudice.
- In a society that does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or circumstances of birth such as gender, ethnicity and national origin.
- In the ethic of reciprocity, and how moral concepts are not absolute but vary by culture, religion and over time.
- In the positive influence of spiritual growth and awareness on society.
- In the importance of freedom of conscience and self-determination within religious, political and other structures.
- In the separation of religion and government and the freedoms of speech, association and expression.

The Three Tenets

Focus

Knowledge

Wisdom

When used correctly, the Jedi Tenets allow us to better ourselves and overcome any obstacle. They help us improve the world around us and fulfil our purpose in life as a Jedi.

Wisdom is the sound application of accrued knowledge and experience through patient, good judgment. Knowledge can be acquired by focusing on the task at hand. Focus is the art of pruning the irrelevant and pouring the best of your mind into what you are doing.

The Code

The Jedi Code comes in two versions which are different ways of understanding the same teaching.

Emotion, yet Peace	There is no Emotion, there is Peace
Ignorance, yet Knowledge	There is Ignorance, there is Knowledge
Passion, yet Serenity	There is no Passion, there is Serenity
Chaos, yet Harmony	There is no Chaos, there is Harmony
Death, yet the Force	There is no Death, there is the Force

The “There is no... there is...” is the original version of the Jedi Code, however this version suffered from people misinterpreting it literally as denial “no emotion, no ignorance, no passion” etc. The alternative version tries to prevent this misunderstanding from happening, by not denying emotion, ignorance, passion etc.

One might understand the two codes as saying “There is, but there isn't. There isn't, but there is.” In this sense they are teaching the same idea, that in spite of Emotion, Ignorance, Passion, Chaos and Death a Jedi focuses on Peace, Knowledge, Serenity, Harmony and the Force.

The Creed

I am a Jedi, an instrument of peace;

Where there is hatred I shall bring love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

And where there is sadness, joy.

I am a Jedi.

I shall never seek so much to be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

The Force is with me always, for I am a Jedi.

*The Jedi Creed is an adaption of the 1912 "Prayer of Saint Francis" published in the La Clochette magazine.

The 16 Teachings

1. Jedi are in touch with the Force. We are open to spiritual awareness and keep our minds in tune with the beauty of the world. We are forever learning and open our minds to experiences and knowledge of ourselves and others.

2. Jedi maintain a clear mind; which can be achieved through meditation and contemplation. Our minds can become unduly troubled and concerned with the happenings of the world. We must work on overcoming our individual issues through training and diligence.

3. Jedi are aware of the future impacts of action and inaction and of the influence of the past, but live in and focus on the Now. We let ourselves flow like water through the events around us. We embrace the ever changing and fluid world, adapting and changing as it does.

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4. Jedi are wary of attachments, both material and personal. The obsession over possessions and people creates the fear of losing those possessions and relationships which can cause ourselves to be trapped in a state of depression and loss.
 5. Jedi understand that well-being consists in the physical, the mental and the spiritual. A Jedi trains each to ensure they remain capable of performing their duties to the best of their ability. All of these are interconnected and essential parts of our training in becoming more harmonious with the Force.
 6. Jedi use their skills to the best of their ability. We do not use our knowledge and skill to boast or be prideful. We are mindful of the ego and mindful of our actions, exercising wisdom and humility.
 7. Jedi understand their limitations. We recognise, and take responsibility, for our failures and develop a level of modesty about them. We respect the right for others to disagree and understand that they themselves are not perfect.
 8. Jedi are patient. We work on training ourselves not to precipitate events around us. We know that becoming a Jedi is long and hard and requires rigorous dedication and commitment. Jedi train to act with a conscientious state of calmness.
 9. Jedi have integrity. We are authentic to what we believe and are open, honest and true to our purpose and our minds. We remove all masks to reveal ourselves as courageous and noble of heart. We do not hide from fear of damage to our image because we know that our image cannot be blemished from the words and actions of others.
 10. Jedi serve in many ways. Each action performed, no matter the scale, influences the world. With this in mind Jedi perform each action with peace, caring, love, compassion and humility. So it is that each Jedi improves the world with each deed they perform.
 11. Jedi are mindful of their thoughts. We recognise the beauty in others and we provide help to those who come seeking it. Through our benevolent actions we strengthen not only ourselves but also our communities. Jedi act without prejudice.
 12. Jedi believe that love and compassion are central to their lives. We must love and care for each other as we must love and care for ourselves; by doing this we envelop all life in the positivity of our actions and thoughts. We are providers and beacons of hope.
 13. Jedi cultivate empathy. We try to view things from another's perspective making us sensitive listeners. We provide the confidence people need when talking through their difficulties and we share our learning with those who would benefit. We do this to help create a more harmonious society.
 14. Jedi are guardians of peace. We believe in helping all those that are in need, in whatever form, to the best of our ability. We recognise that sometimes providing help

requires courage in the face of adversity but understand that conflict is resolved through peace, understanding and harmony.

15. Jedi believe in eternal life through the Force. We do not become obsessed in mourning those who pass. We may grieve at their passing but we are content, knowing that they will forever be a part of the Force and so always a part of us.

16. Jedi make a commitment to their cause and to humanity. Our ideals, philosophies, and practices define the belief of Jediism and we take action on this path for self-improvement and to help others. We are both the witnesses and protectors of the Jedi way by the practice of our convictions.

The 21 Maxims

Prowess: To seek excellence in all endeavours expected of a Jedi.

A Jedi strives to acquire greater skill and expertise in what they do at all times so that it may be used in the service of the greater good, and not for personal profit. This requires discipline, patience and perfect practice.

Justice: To always seek the path of 'right'.

A Jedi is unencumbered by bias or personal interest. Justice is a double-edged sword, one that protects the weak, yet also passes judgements according to a set of values. A Jedi tolerates that which is not Jedi and does not pass judgement on that which causes no harm for it is just.

Loyalty: To have faith in your Jedi brothers and sisters.

A Jedi remains true to what they have learned and to their own teachings. A Jedi always serves those who wish to learn more of the ways of the Force and in doing so, remain loyal to the way of Jediism and their Order.

Defence: To defend the way of Jediism.

A Jedi is sworn by oath to defend their faith and all it encompasses.

Courage: To have the will.

To be a Jedi sometimes means choosing the more difficult path, the personally expensive one. A Jedi knows they must make the right choice, take the right side and that the weak they have sworn to defend often stand alone. A Jedi puts aside fear, regret, and uncertainty yet know the difference between courage and sheer stupidity.

Faith: To trust in the ways of the Force.

Although the ways of the Force may seem strange at times, a Jedi always knows their place and their role within it.

Humility: To accept the ego for what it is.

A Jedi does not boast of their accomplishments and knows that their accomplishment is its own reward.

Fearlessness: To have no self-imposed limits.

Fear is that which prevents a Jedi from accomplishing their duty. A Jedi learns to let go of their fears through their faith in the Force and has no shame in admitting their shortfalls when they occur.

Nobility: To act with honour.

A Jedi does not engage in petty, mean or otherwise dubious activities. Acting with stature and distinction influences others, offering a compelling example of what can be achieved by those who follow Jediism.

Honesty: To avoid lies.

A Jedi is honest with themselves and seeks to always go beyond appearances. There can be no honest self without the knowledge and wisdom to see truth.

Pure Motive: To act with motive and purpose.

Without a sound motive and purpose, action has no meaning, no destination and lacks a foundation. A Jedi moves with the Force, trusts in its ways. A Jedi's actions are firmly based upon a deep motivation to be as their path dictates.

Discipline: To let the self be sole master of the self.

A Jedi's mind is structured, peaceful, unencumbered by emotions, physical state or external stimuli.

Focus: To select what matters most.

A Jedi focuses in the task at hand. Although a Jedi is aware of the past, and wary of the present's impact on the future, through discipline they know how to select and concentrate on priorities.

Discretion: To become invisible.

A Jedi knows there is a time and place for all things. They do not actively interfere in worldly affairs and refrain from overtly supporting or opposing other individuals or organisations.

Meditation: To exercise the mind.

Through regular meditation a Jedi examines their motivations, and are certain that they are not allowing emotion, ignorance, or passion to intrude upon them. Meditation can be used by a Jedi to improve their mindfulness, focus, or patience.

Training: To know one's ignorance.

A Jedi knows there is always something more to learn and seeks new lessons every day.

Integrity: To be consistent.

A Jedi lives as a Jedi at all times. Hypocrisy is their worst enemy.

Morality: To know the danger of belief.

A Jedi knows how contradicting beliefs of what is right and wrong can lead to devastating crimes and conflicts. A Jedi takes a step away from the subjectivity of opinion in favour of the peace of objectivity. A Jedi does not force their values upon others.

Conflict: To know when to fight.

A Jedi knows the conflicting nature of the Force but they also know its peace and serenity. A Jedi never blindly enters conflict and always does so for the greater good.

Intervention: To know when not to act.

A Jedi knows how inaction can have as great an impact as action and how some of the greatest lessons are self-taught. To be a victor is also taking that victory from those you protect. A Jedi intervenes only when a Jedi's intervention is required.

Harmony: To be connected to the Force.

A Jedi seeks to live in harmony with the Force, for that is the reason to be a Jedi. To better understand its ways, to better know one's place within it.

STUDY AND QUALIFICATIONS

Initiate Programme

There are two different types of study at the Temple of the Jedi Order. There is the Degree, which is the normal training one undergoes, and the Seminary Programme, which is ministerial training done by those who feel called to become clergy.

The Initiates Programme (IP) is the first step on the Degree and the first training every member must complete if they wish to become a Jedi Knight, but studying the IP itself is not a requirement if one wishes to remain a member of the Temple.

The IP covers a wide range of subjects, from comparative religion and meditation to physics and personal development tools. This is intended to give new members a basic understanding of what Jediism is and whether the Jedi Path is suitable for them.

The Initiates Programme is an academic, but also a personal and spiritual, journey. The work members do is not meant to be just an accumulation of knowledge, but to cultivate spiritual and personal wisdom which has a real impact in one's life. Members are encouraged to be personal and in depth during the IP as it will be from this work that they are chosen to become Apprentices.

There is a minimum time of 60 days active study before the IP will be considered as "complete"; a minimum time limit is placed to ensure that members understand patience and the long-term commitments of being a Jedi.

When a member has completed the IP, a group of Jedi Knights will review the work to ensure that it is up to a high enough standard, they will then notify all the other Knights that a new Initiate is ready to be Apprenticed.

Apprenticeship

An Apprenticeship, being an Apprentice, is the next step in a Jedi's training at the Temple. An Apprentice is an Initiate who has been taken on by a current Teaching Master and is receiving personal teaching and guidance.

The Apprenticeship is a one-on-one Teacher-Student mentoring relationship whereby the Apprentice will be taught by a senior member of the Temple who has already reached the rank of Knight. They will help guide the Apprentice into becoming a fully-fledged Jedi Knight. To become an Apprentice, the Initiate will be contacted by a Knight and the two will discuss a potential Apprenticeship. If they both agree then a third party will confirm their willingness and ensure they each understand their obligations; then the Apprenticeship will be announced.

The Apprentice's trainer will provide a personalised learning programme to the Apprentice helping them to reach their full potential while educating them in the doctrine, beliefs and practices of Jedi here at the Temple of the Jedi Order.

There is a minimum amount of work that must be completed by each Apprentice regardless of who they are Apprenticed to (though the specific lessons they need to complete will differ).

The Teacher will train their Apprentice until Knighthood with a minimum training time of at least six months. An Apprenticeship ends either with the Knighting of the Apprentice, or the dissolution of the Apprenticeship.

An Apprenticeship may be dissolved by either party at any time, but preferably after some mediation by a third-party.

An Apprentice cannot be knighted without also meeting their Teaching Master's expectations, which vary and will be tailored to the apprentice.

The Temple does not allow members under the age of sixteen (16) to be apprenticed.

Degree Scheme

As a non-profit religious organisation, TotJO has the right to issue religious degrees: Degrees of Divinity (.Div), in effect, degrees in Jediism. The Degree Scheme consists of a set of lessons that are attributed a points value. Once a student has reached a certain amount of points they will be awarded the corresponding degree.

The Degree lessons are a peer-reviewed compilation of lessons created by TotJO's Teaching Masters; to study the Degree Scheme is to study under each of the Teaching Masters at TotJO. This provides a well-rounded and comprehensive programme to learn from.

The Temple currently issues the following degrees: Associate Degree of Divinity (A.Div), Bachelor Degree of Divinity (B.Div), Doctorate Degree of Divinity (D.Div).

The A.Div and B.Div degrees are requirements for rank advancement within the Order. The D.Div degree is honorary.

The A.Div is awarded to those Apprentices who complete their Apprenticeships and become fully-fledged Knights.

The B.Div is awarded to Knights who complete further, independent, training. The B.Div requires a further two Apprenticeships worth of work to be completed by the Knight.

Clerical Training

Clerical Training may be done by anyone who is ranked Initiate or higher. Members wishing to become clergy persons must first go through an interview process to ensure that the role of being a minister is suitable to them.

Being a clergy person is a vocation rather than a simple occupation and requires a specific set of characteristics, so only those for whom the role of the Clergy is inspiring are suitable candidates. However, just because the Clergy life does not suit someone does not mean that they are in any way less 'Jedi.'

The training of the Clergy is done through the Temple's Seminary, which is accessible online to anyone who has completed the Interview. The training itself prepares the Seminarian (clerical trainee) to the challenges of being a Minister of the Temple.

JEDI RANKING

The Temple of the Jedi Order provides the opportunity for members to learn and grow in experience with the support of those who have already dedicated their lives to Jediism. As such, there is a system of ranking that reflects the development, position and duties of each member within the Order.

There are 4 types of 'ranking' in the Order. These are: 'Statuses', 'Ranks', 'Offices' and 'Clerical Ranks'.

A 'Rank' is related to the amount of study that has been accomplished at the Temple.

A 'Status' is related to the level of rights and responsibilities (some legal) that a member has in the Temple.

An 'Office' is a specific position held by a person that relates to specific tasks and responsibilities.

A 'Clerical Rank' is the level of clerical duty and responsibility that a person has in the Order.

Temple Member - Status

An individual who has completed a valid Application. A Temple member must be at least thirteen years of age (13) and those under the age of eighteen (18) must have parental permission to join.

Novice - Rank

A Temple Member who is currently studying the Initiate Programme.

Initiate - Rank

A Novice who has completed the Initiate Programme.

Apprentice - Rank

An Initiate who has been accepted by a Teaching Master as their Apprentice. This involves tasks and lessons and it relies on a good working relationship, dedication and recognition of mutual improvement. An Apprentice must be at least sixteen years of age (16).

Knight - Rank

An Apprentice who has successfully completed their apprenticeship to the satisfaction of their Teaching Master and the Council. They uphold the principles of Jediism as defined by the Solemn Vow, and have completed the A.Div level of the degree scheme.

They can take on Apprentices of their own. A Knight must be at least eighteen years of age (18).

Senior Knight - Rank

A Knight who has completed the Degree Scheme training to B.Div level.

Master - Rank

A Senior Knight who has successfully taught three apprentices.

Grand Master - Rank

An honorary title bestowed upon Masters for exceptional dedication and service to the Temple of the Jedi Order. As such it is not 'higher' than the rank of Master.

JEDI OATHS

There are two major Oaths within the Order: The Simple Oath, previously necessary for you to reach the rank of Initiate, is now no longer required and is optional, while the Solemn Vow is taken upon Knighthood and binds you to the Jedi Way for life.

To take an oath or vow is public and personal in nature. This means it is witnessed by the Temple in the form of a public announcement with direct reference to the person taking it.

An oath or vow is a promise with sacred and legal character, the fulfilment of which is a serious obligation. Such a promise implies more than a wish or a desire but rather is a firm decision to fulfil the oath or vow which is taken

All oaths and vows must be made sincerely and knowingly with sufficient deliberation and due discernment. All oaths and vows must be taken freely, that is without grave and unjust fear, malice or ill intent. Any oath or vow made under such circumstances is invalid.

Also invalid is an oath or vow made out of ignorance or error concerning an element which constitutes the substance of the oath or vow. Ignorance is lack of knowledge; error is mistaken judgment. Ignorance or error invalidates the oath or vow if the person vowing lacked knowledge of, or erred in judgment about, something that is of the substance of the oath or vow.

An oath does not have to be in English, one may use any of the translated versions we have available, but if you make the Oath in a language you do not speak then it is insincere and counts as being invalid.

Simple Oath:

English: "I profess before all my fellow Jedi that I, [legal name] born [dd/mm/yyyy], without reservation, choose the Jedi path with all its duties and responsibilities. I promise to uphold the Jedi teachings, and to live a life worthy of a Jedi."

Français: "Je jure devant tous mes confrères Jedi que moi, [nom], né le [jj/mm/aaaa], sans retenue, choisis la voie du Jedi avec tous ses devoirs et responsabilités. Je promets d'honorer les enseignements Jedi, et de vivre une vie digne d'un Jedi."

Deutsch: "Ich erkläre vor der Gemeinschaft der Jedi, dass Ich, [Name], geboren am [tt.mm.jjjj], ohne Vorbehalte den Weg der Jedi mit all seinen Pflichten und Verantwortungen wähle. Ich verspreche die Lehren der Jedi zu erhalten und ein Leben, eines Jedi würdig, zu führen."

Русский: “Я заявляю перед всеми братьями и сестрами Джедаями, что я, _____, рожден _____, безоговорочно, избираю путь Джедая и принимаю все долги и ответственности связанные с ним. Я обещаю придерживаться учения Джедаев и жить жизнь, достойную Джедая.”

Español: “Profeso ante todos mis compañeros Jedi que yo, [nombre] nacido el [dd/mm/aaaa] , sin reservas, elijo el camino Jedi con todos sus deberes y responsabilidades. Me comprometo a defender las enseñanzas, y vivir una vida digna de un Jedi.”

Solemn Vow:

English: "I, [legal name] born on [dd/mm/yyyy], profess before all and without reservation, that I choose to devote myself to the Jedi path. I vow to uphold the Jedi teachings, to fulfil the duties and responsibilities of a knight, and to cultivate an understanding of the Force."

Français: “Je, [nom], né(e) le [jj/mm/aaaa], professe devant tous et sans réservation, que je choisis de me dévouer à la Voie d'un Jedi. Je jure fidélité aux enseignements Jedi, honorer les devoirs et les responsabilités d'un Chevalier et de cultiver compréhension de la Force.”

Deutsch: “Ich, [Name], geboren am [tt/mm/jjjj], erkläre vor allen ohne Vorbehalte, dass Ich mich dem Pfad der Jedi widme. Ich verspreche, die Lehren der Jedi zu erhalten, die Pflichten und Verantwortungen eines Ritters zu erfüllen und mein Verständnis der Macht weiter zu entwickeln.“

Русский: “Я, _____, рожден _____, перед всеми и безоговорочно заявляю, что по доброй воле отдаю себя пути Джедая. Я клянусь поддерживать учения Джедаев, исполнять все долги и ответственности Рыцарского чина и развивать понимание Великой Силы.”

Español: “Yo, [nombre legal] nacido el [dd/mm/aaaa], me comprometo ante todos, sin reservas, que elijo dedicarme al camino del Jedi. Me comprometo a respetar las enseñanzas, cumplir con los deberes y responsabilidades de un caballero Jedi, y cultivar la comprensión de la Fuerza.”

Additional Oaths

Aside from the Simple Oath and Solemn Vow outlined above there are two other oaths which members of the Temple may be required at some point to take. There is an Oath of Office which is taken by anyone agreeing to take on particular responsibilities within the Temple, and an Oath of Confidence for ordained clergy.

Oath of Office

There are many positions of responsibility that require both dedication and trust from those who choose to fulfil the duties prescribed to them. Because of this we ask all those in such positions to take the Oath of Office below under the conditions outlined above. The Oath does not have to be made publicly though a record of it being taken will be kept by the Council.

Any and all officers are expected to take this oath and be held accountable for their actions if they breach its terms. Officers agree to the conditions of the Oath when they agree to take on the responsibilities of their office, as such officers will be held accountable to the terms of this Oath irrespective of whether there is a record of them taking it.

"I, [insert legal name], do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of [insert title of office], honour my responsibilities, and will, to the best of my ability and with the greatest commitment, serve the Temple of the Jedi Order and its interests."

Oath of Confidence

The Temple Clergy are instructed in empathic listening and Ordained Clergy are bound by the Oath to Confidence to honour the secrecy of what is divulged. We are their Confidant (the clergy person acting as the listener), and they are our Confider (the person conversing their private matter).

"I profess before all that I, [legal name], born the [dd/mm/yyyy], shall honour the Seal of Confidence as prescribed by the Temple of the Jedi Order and its Clergy. That which I come to know, through my service to any other fellow human being, through interaction, observation or from other's account, I will not divulge to any other, in recognition that these matters are by nature Secret. I understand that should I compromise or violate this Oath, my statute as a Clergy member, regardless of grade or position, shall be forfeit."

COUNCIL

The TotJO Council is our General Management as well as Supreme Court to act and decide on appeals. The Council is meant to provide a sense of direction without inhibiting the latitude and trust each Master, Knight and member deserves.

There are seven members on the Council who each have the right to vote on a motion. Motions are presented, discussed and voted upon with a simple majority required to pass the motion. The Council Secretary, who keeps the Council organised, is Adder.

Any Councillor may take Executive Action (implement or change something that would normally require a motion) if there is a present need for action to be taken. Executive Actions can be overruled by the rest of the Council by a vote.

The Councillors at time of publishing are:

Adhara

Alexandre Orion

Akkarin

Br. John

Jestor

Neaj Pa Bol

Wescli Wardest

CLERGY

TotJO can both License and ordain ministers to serve in a clerical capacity. Both licenses and ordinations are Legal in every state in the USA and may be in foreign countries (check with local civil authorities in your area). All Ministers can officiate at weddings and conduct other religious ceremonies (check with your local civil authorities for guidelines).

The clergy is the area of the Temple that deals with the spiritual well-being of the community as a whole. The clergy are not spiritual authorities, but they are entrusted with helping guide people along their Jedi journeys.

Our clergy are not mental healthcare professionals, they are guides, and if a member is feeling particularly emotionally distressed then they should seek the appropriate clinical help.

Training consists of a series of exercises that require your understanding of various topics, including: relevant terms such as “liturgy” and “communion”, the duties of a member of the Clergy, spiritual and social discussions and role-play situations. The seminary training is there to provide assistance and to further expand another individual's understanding of their Jedi path.

Confidence:

What has been called “Confession” in the interest of obtaining 'absolution' from 'sins' has little consequence for a Jedi Temple. “Confidence” one would seek from the Jedi Clergy has no notion of 'repentance' about it, for Jedi have no 'sin'. It is essentially the counsel of one who has been trained in empathy, who knows how to listen; it is the sharing of the burden of a solitary perspective in order to find equilibrium in that of another not so close to the circumstances from which troubling emotions have arisen.

The Temple Clergy are instructed in empathic listening and Ordained Clergy are bound by the Oath to Confidence to honour the secrecy of what is divulged. We are their Confidant (the clergy person acting as the listener), and they are our Confider (the person conversing their private matter).

The Oath of Confidence is a serious matter the breaking of which shall be considered an act of gross misconduct. Clergy should never reveal what is discussed in Confidence to anyone without the express and clear consent of the Confider, unless under local judicial mandate according to applicable regional law.

Please be aware that while all Clergy Persons at the Temple are trustworthy people and can be approached for help, only those who have been ordained are bound by an oath

of confession; Licensed Ministers, whether temporary or full time, are not bound by an oath of confession.

Past acts are bound by the seal of confidentiality, however if plans for future crimes are admitted then the minister is obliged to report what was said to local authorities.

Not all countries recognise confession's confidentiality, if a crime is admitted during confession then it is possible that if required to in a court of law the minister will have to give details of what was said. Please check local civil laws on the issue, or ask the minister prior to confession whether this applies.

Clerical Ranks:

Seminarian

- A person currently going through training in the Seminary.

Commissioned

- A person given a commission for a one-time-only event (such as conducting a marriage ceremony) or for a special mission.
- Can be revoked.

Licensed Minister

- Has all of the abilities of a Deacon but cannot take confession under the seal recognised by law.
- Available to any TotJO rank of Initiate or higher.
- Can be revoked.
- Carries the title of Rev. (but not OCP as a suffix to their name).

Deacon

- The first "rank" of Ordained Ministers.
- Can take confession under the seal recognised by law.
- Can conduct liturgical ceremonies.
- Is responsible for the moral support of the community.
- Available to any TotJO rank of Knight or higher.
- Cannot be revoked.
- Carries the title of Rev. as well as OCP as a suffix to their name.

Priest

- Generally the same as the Deacon although may share in a greater responsibility for the support of the community.
- Can take confession under the seal recognised by law.
- Can conduct liturgical ceremonies.
- Is responsible for the moral support of the community.
- Available to any TotJO rank of Knight or higher.
- Cannot be revoked.
- Carries the title of Rev. as well as OCP as a suffix to their name.

Bishop

- Can ordain other ministers.
- Can take confession under the seal recognised by law.
- Can conduct liturgical ceremonies.
- Is responsible for the moral support of the community.
- Available to any TotJO rank of Knight or higher.
- Cannot be revoked.
- Carries the title of Rev. as well as OCP as a suffix to their name.

SYNOD

The Synod is a clerical body that oversees the broad functions of the Clergy. The Synod is like the Council but is subject to the decisions of the Council. It facilitates, administrates and organises the Clergy by providing direction and implementing changes and updates.

The Synod is made up of five Offices with a single member in each: Pastor, Associate Pastor, Assistant Pastor for the Seminary, Clerical Correspondence Secretary, Clerical Recording Secretary.

A Pastor is a minister responsible for overseeing the spiritual welfare of the Temple. When the Pastor is unavailable the Associate Pastor is acting head of the clergy. The Assistant Pastor for the Seminary also engages with Seminarians (clerical trainees) by providing study assistance and tracking a Seminarian's progress.

The Secretary for the Clergy is tasked with the day-to-day communication and secretarial tasks of the clergy such as contacting clergy members, making announcements, arranging schedules, filing reports and maintaining records.

The Secretary for the Synod is tasked with the day-to-day communication and secretarial tasks of the clergy such as filing reports, maintaining records and recording meetings.

LITURGY

Days of Significance

These are days of significance which honour various aspects of the path of Jediism.

March 21: Day of Recognition - to honour each other and the bonds between us all (also International Earth Day)

Every one of us is an individual expression of the Force in human form. The same goes for all life and all things. This day is set aside for contemplation of this. We are composed of similar physical elements and yet our consciousness is so complex and unique that even those who are born as identical twins may be radically different in personality. Everyone has a right to life, a right to express themselves as whoever they are. A culture and community of tolerance allows those expressions to take place in an arena that acknowledges the sacredness of each person.

May 25: Jediism Day - to honour Jediism and the path (also International Jedi Day)

There are many paths within the Jedi community. Some, like those prevalent here at TotJO, follow Jediism as a faith. Others regard it as a spiritual path. Others still profess a more secular approach. No matter what our own personal experience or observance, we are all Jedi. We share a common inspiration and it is this which is honoured on this date: the release date of the first Star Wars movie. Many have taken the lessons embedded in that fiction and have applied them to the experiences and explorations of our own reality. Each and every one of these ways is that of the Jedi and this day honours them all.

September 21: Day of Harmony - to honour peace and our connection with the Force (also World Peace Day)

The first line of the Jedi Code is “Emotion yet Peace” (or “there is no Emotion, there is Peace” in the Orthodox version). In the same way that pain is a response to a physical disturbance, emotions are the response to a spiritual one. By reflecting on the impetus behind our emotions, we can learn from this as the guidance of the Force. When we understand the motivations, we are more clear to act in a positive and effective way, bringing peace to ourselves.

This process can be applied to each moment of our lives as well as to more macroscopic experiences, such as those of war and strife. As Jedi we seek to maintain peace by understanding the reasons for conflict and then acting in a non-violent and productive way to regain a sense of fairness and therefore bringing renewed peace.

Our connection to the Force guides us in these moments and can provide us with the tools and the strength to act in, and for, peace. Such a sense of harmony is honoured on this feast day and reflects the ideals and energies of World Peace Day.

October 31: Memorial Day - to honour those that have passed back into the Force (also Samhain/Halloween)

The ancient Celtic festival of Samhain honoured this day as being one of the two occasions in the year during which the “veil between the worlds” was said to be at its thinnest. Whereas Beltane (in May) reflected new life and potential, Samhain focused on that which had passed into death. It was a time for honouring ancestors as well as the actions and deeds that had resulted in bringing each person to the current point in their lives. So this feast day is for remembering those that have passed into the Force – not just as a token of their death, but moreover as a celebration of their lives and all that they had contributed to the rich tapestry of the world.

Samhain is more widely celebrated as Halloween, the last chance for spirits and ghosts to manifest before the cleansing power of All Saints Day that followed. Although the nature of this day has diverged from its origins, the theme of death and its observance still remains. This is reflected in the last line of the Jedi Code: “Death, yet the Force” or “there is no Death, there is only the Force”.

December 25: Anniversary Day - to honour the Temple and its founding (also Christmas Day)

As an occasion relating to TOTJO, this feast day marks the day on which its status as an International Church was declared under law. Although the seeds of the Order were sown before this day and they continue to bear fruit as we progress into our future, this day can be observed as an anniversary of that transcendent moment when intent became reality and the Temple was born.

December 31: Day of Reflection - to honour our own past and future (also New Year's Eve)

The Roman God Janus, after whom the month of January is named in the English language, was a god of two faces: one looked back at the past and one looked forward to the future. He was a god of beginnings and transitions, and is this concept that is honoured on this feast day. As Jedi we are mindful of the lessons that the past has to offer as much as we are aware of the potential that the future may bring. The Teachings remind us that “Jedi are aware of the future impacts of action and inaction and of the influence of the past, but live in and focus on the Now” and this day is a chance to achieve this at a time of transition from one year to the next.

Monthly Jedi Reflections

The Reflections are dichotomies of, for lack of better terms, 'vices and virtues' human nature. One cannot reduce all the variables of the human experience into 12 dichotomies of vice/virtue, nor insist that these are the most important. These periods encourage reflection, whether that be on a vice and virtue they promote or a vice and virtue not listed. They serve as reminders to the Jedi that we shall never be 'more than' human, which should be embraced not regretted.

As reflections on human nature, it is important that we remember not only the goals we strive for, but the shortcomings that hold us back; we accept this fact, about all of us, with humility. We should recognise all variations of human nature; we would not wish to forget or reject characteristics which many in society organise their lives by. While these dichotomies are complimentary opposites, the limitations of language encourage us to see them broadly, to see the nuances and extended meanings behind each of them and how they have, do and might apply to us in the past, present and future.

January - Reflection: Tradition, yet Originality

February - Reflection: Attachment, yet Freedom

March - Reflection: Despair, yet Hope

April - Reflection: Cowardice, yet Courage

May - Reflection: Ego, yet Humility

June - Reflection: Chaos, yet Harmony

July - Reflection: Corruptibility, yet Integrity

August - Reflection: Fickleness, yet Discipline

September - Reflection: Iniquity, yet Justice

October - Reflection: Foolishness, yet Wisdom

November - Reflection: Recklessness, yet Responsibility

December - Reflection: Greed, yet Generosity

Each month of the year has been assigned a reflection to encourage all Jedi to contemplate and consider that particular theme. Each first day of the month will host a live service introducing that month's reflection, and clergy are encouraged to incorporate the reflections into their sermons.

KNIGHTHOOD CEREMONY

The Master of Ceremonies (MC) should ideally be a Council Member or one to whom authority has been granted by the Council to officiate the ceremony. The Candidate (C) is that person who is being promoted. If the candidate's Training/Teaching Master (TM) is unavailable then another suitable Member can take this person's place. Names, dates and ranks should be inserted where indicated.

MC: Welcome one and all to this, the occasion of bestowing Knighthood upon a worthy member of our Order. Let us begin the ceremony in reflective prayer:

(A prayer)

MC: May the Force be with you all.

EVERYONE: And also with you.

MC: Having completed the requirements prescribed by TotJO and been deemed worthy by their Brothers and Sisters therein, [C'S USERNAME] begs leave to come forward to receive the responsibility of Knighthood which they have earned. Are you [C'S NAME], known herein as [C'S USERNAME]?

C: Yes, I am

MC: Are you prepared to accept the accolade of Knighthood this day?

C: Yes, I am.

MC: Will the candidate's training Master please step forward and announce themselves.

TM: I am [TM'S NAME], [TM'S RANK] of Jediism and training master to [C'S NAME].

MC: Has the candidate completed all of the required training as prescribed by TotJO?

TM: Yes, they have.

MC: Is the Candidate duly registered as prescribed by TotJO?

TM: Yes, they are.

MC: Is the candidate under any judicial ban that would prevent the taking of this office at this time?

TM: No, they are not.

MC: Is the candidate a member in good standing?

TM: Yes, they are.

MC: And are you satisfied that the candidate is ready to accept the mantle of Knighthood?

TM: Yes, I am.

MC: As a representative of the Council of TotJO, I give my consent to this Knighting. I would ask any other such senior members here present to state their agreement if this be the case.

(Other Councillors present may voice their agreement)

MC: The responsibilities of Knighthood are many. As a representative of this Order, you must uphold the teachings, practices and tenets of Temple of the Jedi Order as well as embodying the virtues, lessons and spirit of Jediism.

You may also wish to contribute to the future of the Order by dedicating time and energy to the training of future Knights. May wisdom be your guide, may courage strengthen your soul, may compassion steer your heart and may the Force be with you always.

[C'S NAME], do you undertake to follow the Doctrine, teachings and tenets of Jediism as proclaimed by Temple of the Jedi Order?

C: I do.

MC: The time has come to administer the Jedi Creed. [C'S NAME], please repeat after me: *(candidate to repeat the following lines, one at a time)*

I am a Jedi, an instrument of peace;
Where there is hatred I shall bring love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.
I am a Jedi.
I shall never seek so much to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
The Force is always with me, for I am a Jedi.

MC: In honour of the commitment and dedication to Temple of the Jedi Order that is required of a Knight, you are also asked to take the Solemn Vow, a record of which will be kept in the archives. [C'S NAME], will you please repeat after me: *(candidate to repeat the following lines, one at a time)*

"I, [C'S NAME]
born on [C'S DATE OF BIRTH: dd/mm/yyyy],
profess before all and without reservation,
that I choose to devote myself to the Jedi Path.
I vow to uphold the Jedi teachings,
to fulfil the duties and responsibilities of a Knight,
and to cultivate an understanding of the Force."

MC: We are all Jedi. The Force speaks through us. Through our actions, the Force proclaims itself and what is real. Today we are here to acknowledge what the Force has proclaimed. By the right of the Council, by the will of the Force, I dub thee [C'S NAME], Jedi Knight of Temple of the Jedi Order. May the Force be with you always!

MC: At this time, would all of the Knights present please recite with me: *(all Knights present, including C repeat the following lines, one at a time)*

A knight is sworn to valour.
Their heart knows only virtue.
Their blade defends the helpless.
Their word speaks only truth.
Their Shield shelters the forsaken.
Their courage gives hope to the despairing.
Their justice undoes the wicked.
Their image brings peace.
Their code breaks the darkness,
Their legend brings light.

MC: Should any member wish to add anything, please feel free to do so now.

(Others present may add their own contributions if any)

MC: I declare this ceremony to be complete. May the Force be with us all.

CLERICAL PROMOTION CEREMONY

The Master of Ceremonies must be a Bishop of TotJO or someone to whom authority has been granted by the Council to officiate the ceremony. The Candidate is that person who is being promoted. The Presenting Minister (PM) is another Minister acting as a witness to the ceremony. Names, dates and ranks should be inserted where indicated.

MC: Welcome one and all to this, the occasion of promoting a member of our Clergy. Let us begin the ceremony in reflective prayer:

(A prayer)

MC: May the Force be with you all.

EVERYONE: And also with you.

MC: The Force guides everyone to serve in their own particular way and some of these people are called to minister its truths and mysteries to others. As servants of the people, Ministers are to shepherd them on their respective paths and to guide them to self-discovery and understanding. With their fellow Ministers, they are to sustain the community of the faithful by the ministry of doctrine and guidance, that we all may grow into the fullness of the Force and better understand ourselves.

Will the Candidate please step forward and announce themselves.

C: I am [C'S NAME], [C'S RANK] of Jediism and known as [C'S USERNAME].

MC: Are you prepared to accept the responsibilities of the role of [CLERICAL RANK] of Jediism on this day?

C: Yes, I am.

MC: Will the PM please step forward and announce themselves.

PM: I am [PM'S NAME], [PM'S RANK] of Jediism and [PM'S CLERICAL RANK] of the Temple of the Jedi Order.

MC: Has the Candidate completed all of the required Clerical training as prescribed by the Temple of the Jedi Order?

PM: Yes, s/he has.

MC: Does the Candidate fulfil the requirements according to their rank at the Temple of the Jedi Order, including all necessary Oaths or Vows?

PM: Yes, s/he does.

MC: Has the Candidate fulfilled all of the requirements for Ordination as prescribed by the Temple of the Jedi Order?

PM: Yes, s/he has.

MC: Is the Candidate under any judicial ban that would prevent this Ordination at this time?

PM: No, s/he is not.

MC: And does this Ordination have the approval of the Council of the Temple of the Jedi Order?

PM: Yes, it does.

MC: Thank you.

Ministers are called to be servants among the people. They are to be messengers, watchmen and stewards of the Church. They are to teach and to admonish, to nourish and to support, and to guide the people through the confusions of life, that they may grow in knowledge and wisdom of the Force.

As Jedi they are to protect the peace and defend the weak. As Ministers they are to uplift the spirit through the guidance of the Doctrine and the wisdom of the Force. With the qualities of compassion, understanding, tolerance and acceptance, they are to open their arms to embrace the community and to provide counsel in times of need.

They are to minister to the sick and prepare those who are transitioning from this world and back to the Force, supporting all those who are affected by such changes. Standing together with their brothers and sisters, they are to provide light through the darkness, that the whole Church may be built up in unity and faith.

In addition to this, Ordination is a commitment for life. It can only be rescinded in the most severe of circumstances as this is a contract between the Minister and the Force, a dedication to serving the people through the Doctrine and the guidance of the Force. This promise is written on the soul and strengthens every fibre of the spirit; as such it is not to be taken lightly and without due consideration.

[C'S USERNAME], Will you on this day devote yourself to the care and the needs of the people as an Ordained Minister of Jediism?

C: I will.

MC: Will you faithfully minister the Doctrine of this church, that our community may flourish in their faith?

CANDIDATE: I will

MC: Will you, reconciled to your eternal existence in the Force, strive to be an instrument of peace in the Temple and in the world?

CANDIDATE: I will

MC: Will you stand shoulder to shoulder with your fellow Ministers in upholding the spirits of the people and guiding them to their highest potential?

CANDIDATE: I will

MC: And will you strive to further your own self, to be the best that you can be and to allow your light to shine forth as inspiration to others that may follow?

CANDIDATE: I will

MC: Thank you. Know that you will always be supported by your fellow Ministers, by the Temple itself and by your own faith in the guidance of the Force. With this in mind, it is with great pleasure that I ordain you as a Minister and [CLERICAL RANK] of Jediism and state that you shall henceforth be known as “Rev. [C’S NAME] .OCP”. May the Force be with you!

Should any member wish to say anything, please feel free to do so now.

(Others present may add their own contributions if any)

MC: I now ask the newly proclaimed Minister to lead us all in the reading of the Creed.

CANDIDATE: Would those gathered here please repeat after me: *(everyone to repeat the following lines, one at a time)*

I am a Jedi, an instrument of peace;

Where there is hatred I shall bring love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

And where there is sadness, joy.

I am a Jedi.

I shall never seek so much to be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal Life.

The Force is always with me, for I am a Jedi.

MC: I declare this ceremony to be complete. May the Force be with us all.

SELECTED SERMONS

Selected Sermons over 2015 ordered by date from earliest (January) to latest (December).

“Welcome to a New Year” - Phortis Nespin

Online at: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/sermons/2159-welcome-to-a-new-year>

Welcome to a New Year.

During the past year we have seen good times and bad. As a Temple, we have had several internal conflicts in which the membership has had to make choices as to the direction we as an organisation should take. It has overcome these “obstacles” in great fashion, and we are better for it. Yet within every battle there are casualties. Some friendships may have been lost, faith tested and lost, lack of desire to be active, and trust lost.

As a “Faith based” organisation, we have a set of standards by which we base our beliefs. Among these are the 16 Teachings, the 21 Maxims, the Tao Te Ching, and of course, the Code and Creeds of the Jedi. It is important that we as individuals understand our teachings on a personal and spiritual level. If you are to truly connect to the Force, you must open your heart and mind to all the possibilities and paths that are made available through the Force. By having deep and personal knowledge and understanding of the Teachings, you are better equipped to face the onslaught of issues that the world throws at you daily.

Basic Teaching #1

As Jedi, we are in touch with the Living Force flowing through and around us, as well as being spiritually aware of the Force. Jedi are trained to become sensitive to the Force's energy, fluctuations, and disturbances.

During this past year, I have had many personal upheavals in which I turned to my beliefs in Jediism and in my background of Christianity, Buddhism, and other religions for guidance. I have had several tests to my beliefs in relation to the Temple, my family, my interaction with the people on this planet, and the future of my life. It is difficult to convey in any amount of words the lack of faith I have had in the human virus that infects this planet. There has been one beacon of light in the world that has offered me sanctuary, and that is the people that I have met here.

Through this Temple, I have an opportunity to read the words of people from many different backgrounds and cultures. I read your thoughts and concerns and find that they are at times as fearful as mine. I listen to you discuss issues and communicate in

higher levels of thought that break through those walls of doubt I have created regarding others. As a Temple we have a melting pot of ideas and solutions to the problems of everyday life.

I am writing this on December 31, 2014 at 13:59 UTC. It is now in the final hours of a year that has seen my son go to war and return home safe. It is a year in which I have driven across this country to redeem a friend who was lost in the shuffle of life. I have fought the good fight on behalf of my fellow citizens as a Trustee in my Village. Some battles I have won while others were lost. I have given my men at the firehouse a safe environment in which to prosper and grow in their profession and yet I have been responsible for several mistakes. I have gained and lost Apprentices here at the Temple in which I have very mixed emotions. I have become drained by the news reports regarding racial and religious tensions. I have had to say goodbye to friends who have returned to the Force. I have had to stand up and face my responsibilities on issues in which I was to blame. It has seen a renewed vigour in my father's cancer problems. All in all, the roller coaster ride has been thrilling and yet I have had doubt.

As you read this I am sure many, if not all of you, can relate to many of the issues I have faced this past year. Some of you have had much worse years than I. It is in this shared happiness and pain that we are connected and in which we can empathise with one another. It is there that I have found my connection to the Force. It is in that empathic relationship that I feel the Force energy that binds us to each other. It is in opening of my heart and mind to others that my connection to the Force becomes greater.

As Jedi, I have connected here with a living part of the Force, your words flow through me and around me, and I have become aware of your spirit in the Force. I have trained myself to be sensitive to your energy, your changes, the fluctuations in the world and the disturbances that affect us daily.

It is the Emotional connection to others that brings us the Peace we seek. It is in the Knowledge of others that we break the cycle of Ignorance. It is in our Passion to be better than ourselves that we find the Serenity within. It is dealing with and forging through the Chaos of daily life that we find balance and Harmony. By facing our Fears together we find the Courage to watch each other's backs. Through understanding our Foolishness, we learn the Wisdom to speak only when necessary. As we face the Death of others and possibly our own, we are assured through our connection to each other, that there is The Force!

“Truth Need Not Be True” - Steamboat28

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2160-truth-need-not-be-true>

This month's theme, and a lot of Christmas-based conversations with terminally conservative family members brought again to my mind a simple truth: Truth doesn't matter.

Or, rather, it doesn't have to be true to matter.

Aesop's fables have delighted, entertained, and taught us for centuries. Similar to the parables of religious teachers like the Christ and the Buddha, Aesop's stories snuck moral teachings into chuckle-worthy tales of talking animals and strangers.

And yet, none of them were true. Do you honestly believe that the fox, the lion, and the ass spoke with one another? Do you really believe that the one man buried his talents in the ground? Do you honestly think that, literally and historically, George Washington chopped down a cherry tree, that Pilgrims and Natives got along that first Thanksgiving, or that Cain and Abel were brothers?

Is there any way we can prove any of that?

Whether you believe it or not, whether you can prove it or not, matters exactly none. What's important is not whether these stories are “true” in the factual sense, but whether or not they are “True” in a sense that they teach us important lessons. Art, Picasso said, is a lie that makes us realise the truth.

In his book, *Modern Magick*, author Donald Michael Kraig says, in a discussion on the history of Tarot:

“Myths aren't just stories. They are stories that promote values that people choose to follow...The mythic histories of the Tarot tell us more about the Tarot's true nature than do simple dates. They also tell us about our own natures...Therefore, the mythic histories...are important not for objective historical fact, but for what they myths mean to me, to you, and to human civilisation.”

We can (and ultimately probably will) fight constantly about what we think is factual, is real, is true, or is historic. And we can do all this while missing the point. It matters less if Zeus exists than it matters what stories of Zeus can teach us. It matters less if Christ is historical than it matters what stories of Christ can teach us. It matters less if Star Wars is fiction than it matters what Star Wars can teach us.

The value of a myth is not in its historicity, but rather in what it reveals about ourselves. Find the lessons buried in the myth, apply them to your heart, and let others fight over what's “real” and what's not. We've better things to do with our time.

And now, in a healthy nod to the theme of the season with a goodly dose of punk mixed in, I'd like to take a moment to break with tradition in these sermons so that we can better understand the tradition that ends these sermons.

In lieu of the traditional recitation of the creed, I'd like us to take a moment of personal reflection and meditation over one possible reinterpretation of those words we repeat so often.

I am a Jedi.

I exist to promote peace among all; it is my duty to rise above the petty squabbles that separate humanity and extend a hand of friendship so that I may lift all others up with me.

I will go to the places where there is hatred, where there is injustice, where there exist intolerance, doubt, hopelessness, despair, darkness, sickness of the heart, sadness, and grief.

I will go there armed with courage, with hope, with love, with faithfulness, with loyalty and truth. I will go there bearing joy and light, forgiving where I might forgive, and sowing forgiveness in others.

I will do what I can to heal the hurts and mend the breaks. I will do what I can to teach others to do the same.

I am a Jedi.

I will seek bread for others before I feed myself. I will fill the glasses of those around me before I slake my own thirst.

I will tend to the wounds of my brothers and sisters before I will seek to bind my own. I will forgive those who hurt me before I seek forgiveness for myself. I will try my best to understand others before I seek to be understood, and I will love all before I seek love for myself.

It is by the act of giving selflessly that I truly understand the joy of receiving, mirrored in another's face. It is when I forgive others that I understand the weight of burden and guilt lifted by my pardon. It is in comforting the hurts of another that we begin to understand the relief of healing in other people. It is through dying that we understand the value of the life given to us, and the time we spent during it helping others to appreciate it as well.

The Force is with me through these challenges to my own desires. I can, I will do these things. Because I am a Jedi.

My thoughts and wishes for a wonderful day, full of reminders of the many things you have to be joyful for in this new year. May the Force be with you all.

“Light in the Dark” (Live Service) - Darren

Online at: <https://www.templeofthefediorder.org/sermons/2164-light-in-the-dark>

Welcome all, whether it be morning, afternoon, evening, or night, to today’s Live Service.

I’d like to begin with a moment or two of silence, during which I’d like you all to find a serene and tranquil place within yourselves, and just breathe.

...

May the Force be with us all...

It’s been talked about before, and it’ll get talked about again; I’d like to start out this sermon by talking about the Bystander Effect (also called Bystander’s Apathy)...

“A social psychological phenomenon that refers to cases in which individuals do not offer any means of help to a victim when other people are present. The probability of help is inversely related to the number of bystanders. In other words, the greater the number of bystanders, the less likely it is that any one of them will help.”

(It’s because of this that, in CPR classes, they teach you to point to one person in particular and tell them to call emergency services before going to work on trying to help; when singled out and told to do it, it breaks that mentality.)

From experience, the same sort of thinking that happens when falling to the bystander effect isn’t exclusive to when there are other people around; it’s easy enough to see something going on, even as the only person around, and think “Oh, someone else will pass by and take care of it soon enough.”

Anyone is susceptible to this, even Jedi; we’re human, we have limits. I’m not bringing this up because of anything that’s happened around the Temple, or anything anyone here has done. No one is in trouble (as if I could be the one shaking a finger at anyone!).

I bring this up because it pays to be reminded of it from time to time, to be aware of it, so as to avoid falling victim to it, or allowing others to.

There may be times during our lives when we really are the only one around “on time” (at just the right time) to help. To prevent something bad from happening to someone or prevent something from getting worse in a situation. We may be the only one willing or able to help. It would be best that we remain present enough to act, so we may actually be helpful.

We may not always be able to solve the problem, make it okay, or save the day, but we can always be a helping hand if we're willing, whether it be a big catastrophe or simply being there as an open ear. So please, keep this in mind. You could be someone's only hope, the last person they reach to for help, and not even know it.

So, I implore you; hold to our Creed, particularly the first stanza. You may get the chance to be someone's light in the dark. Take the chance.

I apologise for the brevity of this service, but that is for good reason. I don't believe expounding on this will do it any real justice; this is, more or less, a "call to arms" against the tendency to remain idle when there is something we could otherwise be doing to someone's benefit.

So, if you will, please follow me in a recitation of our Creed.

[Creed]

Thank you all for coming and listening today. This service is concluded. May the Force be with you all.

"It's All Spiritual" - Connor L

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2166-it-s-all-spiritual>

Prayer for Freedom

As we gather here today, let us take a moment to reflect on what true freedom is.

In this world, we are all slaves to suffering.

Everywhere we look there is pain and dissatisfaction.

Let us look within for true freedom

Where no pain can reach.

I believe in Peace, which gives me perspective.

I believe in Knowledge, which gives me choice.

I believe in Harmony, which gives me balance.

I believe in Serenity, which gives me safe travel.

And, I believe in the Force, which gives me Love.

The natural key to unlocking freedom within each of us.

It's all Spiritual.

I wanted to begin this sermon with a short story. I was watching a show on Hulu called "Little Mosque". It is a comedy show about a Muslim community in small town Canada. It's quite hysterical, but I like the show mostly because it provides wonderful lessons in tolerance and spirituality. As you can guess, the show delves into religious topics. While I don't know all that much beyond a cursory understanding of Islamic tradition, I find the lessons taught to be very applicable to people of any (or no) faith. So, I recommend it.

In this particular episode I was watching, the Imam, an Islamic priest, was attempting to spend his day in spiritual peace. He put a "do not disturb" sign on his office door, and set out to pray and study the Quran. However, every few minutes, he would receive a disturbance from somebody in his congregation. They would rip him away from his spiritual time and pester him into solving problems in the Mosque. He dealt with feminist issues, menial tasks, and everything in between. At the end of the day, he was resting outside the Mosque when the pastor of the Anglican church walked by to sit beside him.

The imam asked the pastor: "Why is it that I can't just sit and have my spiritual time? How am I supposed to be a good spiritual leader if I can't study the Quran?" The older pastor smiled wisely and said: "It's all spiritual."

As I was watching, I found myself nodding along with the pastor's sagely advice. See, the imam had a fixed idea of what spirituality was. He thought that he was only being spiritual when he was studying the holy books, praying, and being in a state of worship. But, this is not so. All the various services the imam performed that day... those were spiritual too. Every breath he took was spiritual. There is no separateness. The idea of this separation is what creates religious fanaticism, causes people to think they aren't spiritual enough for a belief system, and lots of imaginary problems that do not exist. I bet some of you think that you are "less" of a Jedi because you forget the 16 basic teachings. Maybe you do something you feel is not accepted by the teachings, and you smack your head and say: "Man, if I only I was more of a Jedi, I would do better..."

But, this conscious tapping into the Force, remembering the teachings... these are icing on the cake. If you can take a moment to remember that you ARE already a Jedi... that you ARE already spiritual... that you ARE already a luminous being, not this crude matter... then, you can stop being so hard on yourself and begin training more.

This is the service and sermon that begin the month of February, and as such we are shifting our focus from Tradition; yet Originality to Attachment; yet Freedom.

Attachment is this idea that we don't want to let things go. This is what spiritual people might call living in the past. When we have an attachment, we are clinging to the shadows of what was. This is different than love and joy, which are not attachment. Jedi encourage love. It is in the doctrine:

“Where there is hatred I shall bring love;” - Jedi Creed

But, love is here. Love is an action, not a reaction. This is what true spirituality is: Action. It is the practice of intentional living. This is why Jedi practice meditation. We are constantly training ourselves to be here instead of there. If we are there, we cannot love. If we cannot love, we cannot battle hatred. And, when we are not loving in the moment, we are forming attachments to the things that once brought us love. We might hold on to things that used to make us happy. Maybe one might find solace in video games. Just as an example. I don't mean to imply that video games are bad. But, maybe you used to play video games for fun. Now, you're older, more tired, and your job is no fun. You put a band aid on by coming home and picking up Halo 3. This is an attachment. You are not fixing the problem.

This is related to what I was speaking about in the story earlier. The imam felt like he needed to be in a certain place in order to feel happy and spiritual. But, this was an attachment to a state that cannot always give him peace. He relied on outside circumstance to create an environment of spirituality.

Our temples are within. It's ALL spiritual. When we learn to let go of our attachments, we can love. When we can love fully and without judgment, we can be free. When we use freedom to make amazing choices, we find spirituality everywhere. And, when that happens, we are filled with intense joy. May the Force be with you, always.

“Hope When You Are Feeling Hopeless” (Live Service) - Rosalyn J

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2172-rosalyn-j>

Let us first take some time to meditate, to centre ourselves, to reflect on the topic “Hope When You Feel Hopeless”

...

May the Force be with you all

This sermon has come to me on the heels of a rather depressing few weeks. It has been depressing to see that despite all of my hard work and my keen desire to serve others, wherever and whenever I try to open the door I have been unsuccessful. It has made me wonder if the world has been right about me all along. If perhaps I am a helpless, hopeless case who should just accept that and let the world “care” or “not care” for me. These are the thoughts I was thinking in the middle of the night.

But then, I felt something from the Force. Little by little this came to me. A lesson for me a sermon for you only because I know I am not the first to feel hopeless and helpless. I'm not the first and I won't be the last.

This is what the Force has revealed to me.

To feel hopeless, to feel despair is an average thing, common to all people, but you must not allow it to swallow you up, to make you forget yourself. Because you really are someone of value. You are more than the sum of your success and your failures. You are the bonds you create with others as well. But if we want to talk about successes, then let's look back a bit, shall we? Now, I'm not talking about big successes, although those are important too; I'm talking about the little things. EVERY time you got back up when the people of the world, when the circumstances of the world, knocked you down. To fall 20 times is indeed saddening, but you get up 21 and it's no longer sad, it's a success; and those times you fell aren't as important anymore. And don't forget also, that every big success in life is made up of little successes day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, step by step.

Remember that you have power in your corner. The feeling of despair is made exponentially worse when one feels all alone, when one forgets they have the support surrounding them that they need to make it through the rough patch and come out on the other side. We Jedi are fortunate in two ways: we have the Force which guides us and reveals things to us and we have each other here at the Temple. As I said earlier, the Force revealed the subject and body of this sermon to me, but I wouldn't have received it if I were closed off.

Furthermore, the Temple presents an elaborate support structure with listeners and lessons. There are opportunities to vent your frustrations to a sympathetic ear, and you may find that in the midst of your venting there is some solution or a lesson or two. Most important, don't forget that the Temple is here for you in your dark moments as well as your light. Resist the temptation to hide away, to fight and tame the dragon alone, because you are not alone. We are on a journey together.

To conclude, to get hope when your feel hopeless, you need only remember that the feeling of despair is average, that you are more than the sum of your successes and failures, that you have come through this before, that life's big successes come step by step and that the Force and the Temple are your allies.

Thank you very much for your time. May the Force be with you.

[Creed]

“Be Your Own Inspiration” - Rosalyn J

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2173-rosalyn-johnson>

This week I have been working on an assignment at Force Academy titled “Real Heroes” for which the instructions were to give a detailed account of individuals that I found to be inspiring. Initially, I was going to take the cliché route and detail people of note: Martin Luther King Jr, Mother Teresa, Jesus of Nazareth, etc. Then, I thought I might bring it a little closer to home: citing parents, teachers, and friends. In the end, I determined that I will be my *own* inspiration.

What’s the problem with looking outside for sources of inspiration?

We don’t really know the person we are admiring.

Unless we stalk the person we admire day and night, what we see is a “public mask”. We hope that the public mask is as close to the authentic person as possible, but it is inevitable that there will be some major differences between what the person presents to you and who they really are. This is true for professionals, friends *and* family.

This is even worse when we look at public figures whose images are filtered through their own public relations teams and the media. There is an agenda behind every book, every article, every interview, every speech, etc. because they have an image to uphold. We as their adoring public expect certain behaviour from them particularly if we admire them. Behaviour outside of that norm is not treated as a regular occurrence, but an anomaly. Even if the mountain of evidence becomes great, we hold out hope that the person is admirable.

What we see is also filtered by our own biases.

It is said that a snap judgement is made on a first impression in an instant and there are many things that go into creating a first impression: appearance, tone, body language, deportment, etc. We scan for all of these things unconsciously based on what we have learned from society and our own experiences. Many times we are not aware that we have certain biases that colour our first impressions of individuals. As well, there is the matter of others making the first introduction. “I’d like you to meet my friend Sally, she’s really (insert a laundry list of excellent qualities making sure to avoid those annoying habits)”. Then of course the first impression is coloured by the friend’s impression of the person which just makes for a really huge mess. It isn’t much different if you are “introduced” to a well-known and admired public person. The snap judgement is still made, the biases are still there and we are caught in the same trap.

Isn’t it a little egotistical to be one’s own inspiration?

It could be seen as such, but I don't believe it is. In fact, I think it's a very mature stand to take. As I have explained, because of the lack of knowledge and our own biases which colour the way we see people, we aren't really admiring or drawing inspiration from the authentic person, but an illusion created in some ways by them and in some ways by ourselves. If it's a little egotistical to say "I am my own inspiration" then don't say it. Just do it. Just be it. Now, finally after all this time I understand Jiddu Krishnamurti when he says that there can be no master, no teacher, no method, that we have to be a light unto ourselves in *Freedom from the Known*. We can either be a light unto ourselves or chase an illusion and frankly I prefer the first.

What are the benefits of being your own inspiration?

I've thought long about this, and so far I can cite three benefits of internal inspiration:

Empowerment

Seeing the self as a source of inspiration can provide tremendous empowerment. When you reach inside and find historical examples of admirable qualities within yourself, I believe you are more likely to exhibit those qualities, not only that but you will find other qualities to embody. This is all about self-talk. When we say negative things to ourselves such as "I am never good enough, smart enough, good-looking enough, etc." our body and mind conform to that. But, when we are our own inspiration, certainly it may take some searching, but we can find those qualities and we can say to ourselves "I am smart enough, I am good enough, I have self-worth, etc." then, miracle of miracles, our mind and our body conform, we begin to more fully embody those things. If we consider ourselves capable rather than incapable, how much more likely are we to do what needs doing?

Greater Self Empathy

Remember all of that grace we give to people who slip up when we admire them from afar through the mask of our biases and expectations? It turns out that is helpful, for ourselves. It seems we are our own worst critics. We fall one time and suddenly we are a horrible human being, the very scum of the universe! Let's be a little more understanding. Give ourselves the benefit of the doubt as we would others we admire. It ultimately comes down to a level of respect. Do we have the same level of respect for ourselves as we do for others? If so, then it means that we understand that one mistake doesn't make a habit. We respect ourselves enough to say truthfully "I made a mistake, but I am still (insert all the admirable/inspirational qualities you possess and use them to turn that mistake into a lesson).

Greater Self Knowledge and a More Authentic Self Concept

Taking a hard and honest look at yourself can be a harrowing task. You will uncover things you'd prefer to remain hidden, but let's face it, no one really can know you better than you. You are the only one who knows your emotions and their triggers. You are the only one who knows your motivations. You are the only one who knows what you look like when you take that public mask off. You know your strengths and your weaknesses. The truly admirable quality here is the courage it takes to look at yourself, to truly know yourself as you are. The truth is: we have strengths, we have weaknesses, we have parts of ourselves we wish didn't exist, but they do, and they are what make us unique. Some things we consider strengths, we can make even stronger, and some weaknesses we can work on, but we will never be free of all of our weaknesses nor all of our undesirable qualities.

We were never meant to be perfect. We were meant to be us. You are you and I am me. I can never be you and you can never be me, so let's not chase after one another and instead look inside ourselves and find the person that is an inspiration because they are real, and true, and human.

"Cowardice, Yet Courage" - Darren

Online at: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/sermons/2178-cowardice-yet-courage>

Our Doctrine page says "**Courage: To have the will**". To be a Jedi sometimes means choosing the more difficult path, the personally expensive one. A Jedi knows they must make the right choice, take the right side, and that the weak they have sworn to defend often stand alone. A Jedi puts aside fear, regret, and uncertainty yet knows the difference between courage and sheer stupidity."

I think that's about right, at least for the proverbial Jedi who is the perfect specimen of Jedi-liness. For the rest of us, it's maybe something to aspire to, like many of our other ideals.

Cowardice is when we let fear get the better of us, the fear that we all feel at some point in our lives. It stems from greater concern for the self than concern for others who may be facing the same situation. It can make us stop in our tracks, doubt ourselves, miss an opportunity, or in some cases, make us tuck-tail and run in the opposite direction. Everyone has times, or at the very least has had times, when this happens to them, and while it may not fit well into our idea of what a Jedi ought to be, it fits very well as part of what experiencing being a human being is. We can't be entirely free from our self-concerned egos, and sometimes we lose our composure.

Courage, on the other hand, is when we best the fear, doing what must be done despite the fear we feel or the risk that may be involved. It often involves selfless action,

stemming from greater concern for those around you rather than yourself. It can be perseverance under the weight of adversity, or simply standing up for something you feel is right, even when the odds are against you. Clearly, of the two, Courage is the nobler, the one that a Jedi strives to achieve at every opportunity, as we seek to accept our egos for what they are and act (sometimes) from a place other than our perceived separate self.

You feel the fear either way, but it's a matter of how you choose to respond that makes the difference.

Something tricky with these concepts that I'd like to make note of is that it isn't always cowardly to run, nor is it always courageous to fight. It may depend more on the intent of the action, rather than the performed action itself. A person who fights or stands up for something to further their image in the eyes of others is not being courageous, they're being a show-off. A person who knows when their influence is spent and retreats is not a coward, they are living to fight another day. What's right in each situation will be determined by the circumstances of that situation; having a rigid rule wouldn't work well with that...

So why "Cowardice, yet Courage?" Why is that the reflection of the month/title of this sermon?

Because we contain both, and like the wolves in that supposed Native American story that gets passed around so much, it's the one that you feed that thrives. In this case, the "Jedi Way" is to be courageous at all opportunities, but this is one that ultimately you have to hold yourself to. You will act with and without courage at different times in your life, and no one can make you have courage. It's up to you, you've got to find and use it yourself.

I always try not to sound preachy when I write these things. I don't like trying to tell others how to live their lives (even if I occasionally make suggestions; motherly instinct :p), especially when I'm no expert on living anyway; no more than anyone else, I suppose. That being said, I don't feel like I'm in any position to tell any of you "stop being a coward, start being brave" or anything like that, because I'd be a hypocrite. There are definitely times when I've acted in my own interest, or backed down from a challenge because it would have been in some way "dangerous" to me, or my ego, and I'm willing to bet the rest of you and the rest of them have too. I don't like it, and I don't feel very Jedi-ly when it happens, but it's part of life, being human. We learn, and we grow, and we know how to be courageous the next time. If there's anything you get from this, I hope it's that. Don't be too hard on yourself, just get it right next time.

“Fear Not” - RyuJin

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2180-fear-not%20included>

Cowardice: a trait wherein fear and excess self-concern override doing or saying what is right, good and of help to others or oneself in a time of need—it is the opposite of courage. As a label, "cowardice" indicates a failure of character in the face of a challenge.

Courage: the ability and willingness to confront fear, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation. Physical courage is courage in the face of physical pain, hardship, death, or threat of death, while moral courage is the ability to act rightly in the face of popular opposition, shame, scandal, or discouragement.

Fear not Jedi, for you are braver than you think.

It is natural to experience fear when faced with threatening challenges. Fear enables us to survive by triggering our fight or flight response. As a Jedi we must be aware of our fear, and be able to avoid acting on our fear. If we give in to our fear we may survive whatever trial creates it, however we lose a part of our self in the process. “fear is the mind killer” it can paralyse us, prevent us from seeing the truth and keep us from acting rightly. A life lived in fear is a tragedy.

So how do we avoid this tragic life? By seeing our fear, by facing it head on, by having courage. How do we do this? By having faith in ourself, in our knowledge, in our abilities, in our family , in our friends. by knowing what is right and knowing that we have that support structure to hold us up when we do what is right.

Cowardice is the abundance of fear. It is the result of allowing our fear to control us.

Courage is not the absence of fear, but the acceptance of it. When we can face our fear and overcome it we are courageous and brave. We can achieve anything. We are Jedi.

[Creed]

“For Me or Not For Me, That Is the Question” - Phortis Nespin

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2184-for-me-or-not-for-me-that-is-the-question>

Having just celebrated my 35th anniversary, I thought I would share the best piece of marriage advice I ever received.

I was walking past a neighbour's house a couple of weeks before my wedding. The man that lived there was in his 90's since the day I met him 15 years earlier. He always

seemed to be 90 something. I remember attending his 75th anniversary party with my parents. Sammy was a golden glove boxer in the days when boxing was a career path.

As I passed he called me to his front porch and asked me to sit with him. Sammy was a short stocky Italian with an attitude. The nicest guy you could meet unless you pissed him off. But on this particular day he was in a giving mood.

Sammy looked at me as said, "I hear your getting married and I want to give you some advice." Of course my ears perked because this was a rare opportunity to listen to a very respected member of the neighbourhood. "There are three things you need in order to have a long and happy marriage" he continued, "First of all you need to talk to your wife. Don't just complain to her, but seriously tell her how you feel, she is not a mind reader."

"The second thing you need to do is listen to her. Don't just hear the words, but understand them and ask questions if you don't. You're not a mind reader!"

"The last thing you need is to compromise! The last word of the Good Lord dying on the cross was not leaving you in charge of the world! She has every right to a good life as you do."

Never sleep on the couch or go to sleep at night without finishing an argument. Compromise is a shared settlement. Sometimes she wins, sometimes you win. In actuality, you both always win. It all comes out even in the wash.

Compromise is the giving up of yourself, your Ego, for the betterment of all. There are times that we all need to give into our egos. Self- preservation is a fine example of giving into our egos, but never at the expense of someone else's life or safety.

Our topic for this month is EGO; yet Humility. I will admit, when I first read this I said something to the effect of...BULL S^%&%T!! My first impression was that if we have an ego, you can't have humility.

But then I realised that having an ego does not mean egotistical. Although the ego has to do with "the self", it does not mean selfish. We all have an EGO in the contexts of being self-aware in the psychological and physiological sense. It is in the context of being aware only in the needs of ourselves, and forsaking the needs of others, that the ego becomes dark and evil.

A false humility is when this undesirable ego uses praise as a way to feed their ego, by accepting that praise insincerely. So as I contemplated the Ego; yet Humility concept, it came to me that a Jedi Ego is based on Service to Others. In that context, humility would be a given, as a Jedi does not seek to receive as much as he wishes to give, for it is in the giving that a Jedi receives!

Marriage is the ultimate example of Ego; yet Humility. We must fully commit ourselves to the relationship, be selfish in wanting to build a good life for each other, yet maintain a modest or low view of one's own importance in building it, as compared to the importance of the relationship with your partner itself.

“A Lesson on the Birds and the Bees” - J Roz

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2185-a-lesson-on-the-birds-and-the-bees>

There! Did I get your attention? Yes class, we are going to be talking about the Birds and the Bees. No I'm not talking about sexual intercourse. I'm talking about what is going on in your own environment today.

I have had two pretty sharp lessons in the past two and a half weeks concerning birds and bees and I thought it was good enough to share.

Some of you know me, those who don't here is a little more background. I grew up on a large two hundred acre farm out in the middle of nowhere, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. We were literally sixty miles to the closest grocery store. I grew up on a dairy but we also had horses, sheep, goats, rabbits, chicken, ducks, etc; we had a lot of livestock. We also had a very large garden, are active hunters and fishers. I worked hard sun up to sun down and of course like most farm kids when the time to graduate and move away happened I packed up everything I owned and moved away to college. That was a culture shock. From Wal-Mart that is open twenty four seven to watching movies at the movie theatre to getting fast food. These were all novel things because the farm provided everything we needed and for anything else we would have to plan to go into town and that was a whole day affair. There were people and cultures from all over the world at college, there was drinking and parties and all that fun stuff that comes with a college environment. Truth be told though I actually really never partied. I came to go to school and I kept my nose in the books and worked hard in classes, unlike some of my classmates.

However in all of this I did not realise how heavy my heart started to become. I missed my animals, I missed waking up with the sun and crawling out of bed, putting on the stinky farm boots and trudging out into the rain to call in the cows, the nicker from the mares all demanding grain, rabbits rattling feed dishes, the chickens crowing, the spring babies, all of it. I decided on top of going to school full time that I needed to get a full time job so I could bring my ranch horse up with me while I finished college. I thought if I had my horse that I had raised and used for everything on the farm that I could be happy.

That too was not enough. Fast forward a couple years, I graduated, got married, bought a house, got a dog, and brought my old dog from home to live with us too. I bought another horse, but I still lived in town. I worked with the city to create ordinances for backyard chickens and I was the first one in our town to be legally licensed to have birds. Still my heart was lonely and now I was starting to get sick. I developed allergies, my teeth started cracking apart. I gained a lot of weight (coming from the farm I was very fit) I started also having reproductive problems. I started a large garden; I produced enough food in our small city yard to keep us in carrots, onions, potatoes, squash and beans to last us through nine months. I added cats and another dog, plus another horse.

In the end that still did not satisfy the feeling of having land, being able to wake up to the environment, to hear the wolves howl and watch the deer play in the fields. I have to instead hear police sirens, cars honking, children screaming, and when I look out at night I cannot see the stars, back home we saw the Northern Lights almost constantly. The city lights have drowned those all out.

I'm not happy here in town. Our house is for sale, we have been trying to move for three years, but in a bad economy with no real industry in the area that has been tough. In talking to a realtor about why we want out I told her I wanted to move back to the country and be so far away from everyone that I cannot see another human being. She looked at me completely flabbergasted and said "Don't you know what you will be giving up?!" I grinned back and said "Don't you know what you have lost?"

The birds and the bees, its about being connected. Not just about being some dirt worshipping tree hugging hippy type but know your environment. I could tell you when the bears were around just by the way animals avoided certain areas of the woods, I could tell you where the deer dropped their fawns in the spring. Where the turtles laid their eggs on the sandbar near the river we lived on. Today as humans we have lost this. I'm sure I could get every student in my class to tell me all about Kim K...whatever her name is. But could they tell me why honey bees are dying in tremendous quantities? Could they tell me why in America we have rates of Diabetes, Cancer, Heart Disease, drug abuse etc? Our environment creates our health.

Ok back to the birds. I have five chickens in my backyard right now. They give me eggs every day that are nutritionally way healthier than anything I can get in the store. (check out the Mother Earth News Article on backyard chicken eggs compared to store bought eggs) I'm not going to go into a lecture about the mistreatment of industrial animals here but rather would encourage you to know where your food comes from. My chickens are great birds. I have raised every one of them, I know all of their little personalities and they will let me know when something is wrong. We have a relationship that is dependent on each other. However I also have just become a Pollorum tester for the State of Wisconsin (which means I am a representative of the State Veterinarians office

to check for infectious diseases of poultry). From time to time I have agreed to take someone's extra chickens and didn't realise how dangerous that was. I have taught various classes on chicken keeping and have even been able to raise meat birds too. However about two and half weeks ago (just after I finished my certification) I agreed to help a friend butcher some extra roosters that she had. Now I did not know how dangerous agreeing to do something like that was. There are so many diseases that run rampant in poultry and simply having bird poop on your boots can be a carrier such as the recent Avian Influenza is demonstrating. I thought we should be ok though because we are just butchering them at my place. I have all the knives and such to do it anyway.

So she brings the birds. I dispatch all four quickly and cleanly. We go to start butchering them and I find that they are covered in mites and lice. I immediately pack up the carcasses after showing what I found and told them they were now not able to be eaten and she would have to remove them from my property because now I have risked the health of my birds. Well crap, I felt terrible. I was trying to help out a friend, who clearly didn't know her birds had this problem and now I have to go into decontamination of everything around me even the ground where I slaughtered the roosters because that could be enough to get my birds sick. Environment my friends, she didn't know her environment and thus what her birds environment contained. She will have to go through costly treatments and possibly loose birds because of this.

That's the last time I do anything like that. It is too great of a risk and I have spent thousands of dollars on my birds, yes I only have five here in town but my best friend keeps the rest of my flock of thirty plus birds on her property. I raise a rare breed of chicken called Icelandic's. I cannot take a chance like that again. I do feel bad for my friend but she also is responsible for her animals as well. I was going to use those birds for stew meat. We never let anything go to waste on the farm and I still use all that I can here. I even butchered the big doe my husband hit this winter and used what I could from her. I will always offer help when I can but now it will be more from a distance than direct hands on.

So that brings me to my bees. Honey Bees are at a critical time in our world right now. I'll let readers do some digging on their own but seriously if we as a human race do not clean up our act right now the honey bee will be dead by 2035. That is a fact. One in three bites of food come from honey bees and I like to eat so my interest in saving the honey bee is an interest to save all of you too.

Environment. Our environment is so toxic that the honey bee cannot survive in it without help from humans at all. Now true the honey bee is not a native creature of North America however we use them constantly in agriculture for many things and we cannot survive without them anymore. I worked again with the city to allow honey bees, long story short and a jerk in zoning later and I do not keep my honey bees in town. PM me if

you want more details. Anyway after a year of research and study I decided to give it a try and loved having bees. I was able to afford one colony of bees and I learned about an entirely new world. Fascinating stuff! I struggled to keep them alive all winter (which is a feat let me tell you!) and got them through. However right is now a hard time for bees in my area there is nothing blooming and if they have gone through all their winter stores then they starve. Humans have to help them through this hard point. I thought I had my bees going strong and they ended up also failing and starved. I did not create a good environment for them. I was wrong, I thought they had made it through the tough time. The same day I received three new packages of bees. I went to put them in the new homes we had made for them and I made another mistake. I was trying to give them a good environment in which to create a strong new hive and instead I killed them by spraying them with sugar water. Now down south where it is warm that is a good thing. Up here the temps dropped that night and the next three days we had snow. I made a three hundred dollar, thirty thousand bee Popsicle.

I was absolutely devastated. I did everything exactly right from what the books had said and I was getting stung a lot when I got them and was trying to get them in the hive. My smoker was doing nothing to calm them. Bees can handle cold, but they cannot handle cold and wet.

I actually made myself sick. I had saved all winter what little I could for them and I killed them in less than forty eight hours. I destroyed their environment in that I did not give them a good one to start with. I had a pounding migraine for two days and in meditation I came to a realisation. I realised that yes, I certainly had created a bad environment but I also learned a hard lesson again. A mistake was made with the thought I was doing the right thing when I was not. However a master does not become a master because he/she has a textbook life. They have become a master through failure, sometimes thousands of times. I learned and I will never make that mistake again. I am going to get another couple colonies of bees as I can afford to and keep those lessons close in mind.

In talking to my father about it (who totally loves the fact that I want to come back to the farming life) he smiled, patted me on the back and said "That's farming Heather, you are a farming now."

It brought tears to my eyes yet again. Know your environment, from the smallest plants to the tallest trees. Once you have invested in that environment you start to notice the small things, from the ants to the birds to the bees. When you care about the environment suddenly you find a new world and even your health becomes better because you are making educated decisions on what you are and where you are. I too need to keep this lesson in my mind and enjoy what I have as well. I know everyone cannot just drop everything and move to the country either, for some that is just not possible and that's okay too but I ask you to do this.

Think about it. The Birds and the Bees. Oh and go hug a tree...

“13” (Live Service) - Alexandre Orion

Online at: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/sermons/2187-13>

Good Day, Everyone...

Let's take a few moments to settle into ourselves : to meditate, to contemplate, to intro- and/or outro-spect, or to pray – to actualise our connexion to the Force and to come together in the spirit of our unity...

...but let's not stop there, thinking of how appropriately spiritual we are right now. Let's dive into the heart of it:

What did we really do for those three minutes? Where were our thoughts? If they wandered, did we bring them back, or were we off chasing our desires, even if they were 'spiritual' ones?

To be quite frank about it, if they were not spiritual ones...

(Thinking about needing to feed the dog, thinking about that bastard that really needs told off, thinking about “how pretty I am” or hoping that this bloody sermon doesn't last too long...)

...all the better, for those can be more easily understood. That is just how our minds function.

But, if they were spiritual – what exactly was happening there? What exactly are we looking for in what we call 'spiritual'?

Of course, I certainly do not want to discourage it – since some of the things we do in that particular theme tend to be quite nice – but it merits some consideration.

What exactly do our 'spiritual' inclinations do for us? What are we hoping for exactly? We may have refined or re-defined our notions about deities, but have we given up on that of salvation?

Do we even know?

We make a lot of fuss about the Ego and our preference for a degree of Humility, unable really to put a firm finger on what one or the other really is.

The Ego, that slippery, elusive non-entity that stares us down contemptuously or adoringly from the looking-glass, casting its critical or approving gaze from the lifeless reflections of our own unaware eyes (being intent on the “seeing” rather than the

“looking”), regrets or affirms its place – Humility notwithstanding – and hopes for preservation somehow...

For about 200 or so years now, since such a time as we got tired of being obedient to the Christian cosmology, we've discovered that consumerism, science, art and philosophy don't do so very much to relieve our existential angst:

the absurdity that we are mortal and will indeed die. This is true for us as individuals as well as entire civilisations and perhaps the species as a whole.

That which arises also recedes, this is the way of all things. Yet, though we may have had the insight to do away with the Christian notion of salvation, we haven't quite gotten all the holes filled in from where we dug the roots up.

We've turned to Eastern traditions with colourful simplicity and the notions of dukkha, samsara and nirvana but these seem a little too exotic.

All in all, we tend to still 'hope' for something to save us – to save us from ourselves, from fear and anxiety, from powerlessness, from death, from the scary prospect of non-existence. The Ego just can't get a grip on its own non-continuity...

This is a delightfully deceitful and dreadful error:

Tao Te Ching 13 :

Success is as dangerous as failure.

Hope is as hollow as fear. What does it mean that success is as dangerous as failure?

**Whether you go up the ladder or down it,
your position is shaky.**

**When you stand with your two feet on the ground,
you will always keep your balance. What does it mean that hope is as hollow as fear?**

**Hope and fear are both phantoms
that arise from thinking of the self.**

**When we don't see the self as self,
what do we have to fear? See the world as your self.**

Have faith in the way things are.

**Love the world as your self;
then you can care for all things.**

The return is the way of the Force. There is nothing more eternal to hope for...

When we consider the “World as Self,” sometimes the inclination to grandeur takes over.

The old 'forever and ever' resounds in the conscience... not that we could possibly know what that means, of course. In our collective memory, we can think back perhaps five generations. No one can remember six or seven.

And our “love” for future generations – that the ecologists advocate – can be only an abstraction.

Even the “World” doesn't wish for immortality.

It isn't that we would be so careless as to throw all caution (and morality) to just degenerate into the 21st Century's version of the Hobbsian brutes neither...

...but holding out “Hope” for a better tomorrow takes our attention off of today.

It is a broader version of putting off happiness until one 'has' or 'does' something...

... and those 'having' and 'doing' get interminably postponed.

The phantoms that are hope and fear take us out of the present where we really can do something – and that something we can do here & now can be quite beautiful as long as we're doing it for the present and not for some illustrious tomorrow.

We can, through knowledge and focus, act wisely to not engender future suffering, but our actions have to be now – not “when we discover this”, “get rid of that” or “run out of (whatever we're plundering)”.

The Ego that we so desperately 'hope' for something to come along and save is the same that puts off doing things now and consoles itself in its gratifications until its desires end up doing itself in ...

A little humility can ease our tensions over the hope-and-fear phantom haunting.

Should we accept the absurdity of the meaninglessness of our lives – of Life, in general for that matter – and that our precious Selves are not going to be able to stave off death whether we have garages and closets full of crap we don't need, then we may be able to put our awareness to use living better in the present – the future can take care of itself provided today is well spent.

The one thing that is certain of the future is that we will indeed be dead in it. Nothing that we can 'hope' for in spiritual, psychological, scientific or physical sectors is going to alter that destiny. How therefore can we take ourselves so seriously ?

All of our paltry conflicts, our desires, our accusations ... in the blink of an eye (relatively speaking), none of it will matter. We are leaving future archeologists a dump to dig up later on.

(It would be sort of fun to see the look on their faces when they find some of our crap, I suppose) LOL.

“The Justice of Choice” - Archon

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2197-robert-mckinney-archon>

Inequity and justice seem to be opposites, contrasting what is unfair with what is. As opposites, these are perspectives on what fairness is.

Throughout history, philosophers have commented on justice. Plato, as referenced in The Republic, states that justice is the balance of harmony between the people and the state. John Locke believed that justice was a universal concept where people receive the justice or injustice that they are due. John Stuart Mill insisted that justice was a part of a system that focuses on the consequences.

The important point of this is very simple: Justice is a perspective.

When a person reacts to something he or she feels is unjust, the response is based in what he or she feels is unjust. Whether this is based in cultural expectations, personal beliefs, or legal implications, the choice remains individual.

It might seem obvious, but take a moment and really think about it. If our perceptions of justice are based on the perceptions we choose, then our expectations of justice can be changed by understanding why we believe what we do. Given time and introspection, we may find that our perceptions of justice and inequity are results of the world around you and not a personal choice.

If you feel that something that has occurred lies in the realm of inequity, take a moment and understand why you feel that it is. Take the moment and know for certain why you feel that you need to react to the situation. The time you spend, even if it is less than a second, may allow you the time to react in a manner that you can stand behind.

May the Force guide you to the justice you feel is right.

“A live Friends sermon on the ‘Yet’” (Live Service) - Alexandre Orion

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2198-a-live-friends-sermon-on-the-yet>

Alexandre_Orion: the sermon is going to be on the current theme and on the one that I thought it was

but there isn't really a sermon

Alexandre_Orion: it is going to be more of a "topic"

Alexandre_Orion: and I'm going to ask anyone who would like to contribute/participate

You see

I thought this month's theme was "Iniquity, yet Justice"

and then GE pointed out to me that it is "Fickleness, yet Discipline"

Proteus: it could be.

Alexandre_Orion: and then Ros told me that indeed, it was "Iniquity, yet Justice"

so

Proteus makes mistakes :P

CryoX: The theme is apparently very fickle

Alexandre_Orion: I've just said "screw it" and we're going to talk about the "yet"

CryoX: haha

Rosalyn_J: We are both right

Alexandre_Orion: in that way, we're treating ALL of our themes

because

CryoX: would the plural be yeti?

Alexandre_Orion: because even

Rosalyn_J: LOL

Alexandre_Orion: :?

We'll notice that in any of the dichotomous relationships we focus our themes on ...

Alexandre_Orion: there is a "yet"

now

what does that "yet" mean to us ?

Proteus: the dance

Alexandre_Orion: To me, it implies that we are going to have both characteristics at the same time ..

right, GE :)

CryojenX: I feel like the yet, is the Force itself.

Alexandre_Orion: a dance

a balance

Rosalyn_J: The middle way

Alexandre_Orion: precisely ...

Iniquity, for example

gross immorality

that is indeed an aspect of our characters

most of the time, we are able to keep it in check

cheque ?

(or something like that)

Rosalyn_J: check

Alexandre_Orion: thank you, Ros

Rosalyn_J: :)

Alexandre_Orion: and for as much as we are prone to slant the "ego" as a bad thing ...

Rosalyn_J: Its funny though that our view of morality/immorality changes when we view someone else as opposed to ourselves

Alexandre_Orion: ... it is that which "checks" our mischievous side

of course, Ros ... because someone else's mischief doesn't get filtered through our OWN ego

our own conscience

Alexandre_Orion: we'll notice that in the place of "yet" we do not say "instead of"

for both aspects of the dichotomy

Edan: I prefer 'and' rather than 'yet'

Rosalyn_J: curious

Alexandre_Orion: it means pretty much the same thing, Edan

Rosalyn_J: I'd like to know why

Edan: Maybe, but they 'feel' different to me subtly

Alexandre_Orion: it is just that since they are contraries, we oppose them against one another

okay, Ros

you've heard me babble on about "coincidentia oppositorum" before

or "enantiodromia"

Rosalyn_J: well

Alexandre_Orion: :P

first

Rosalyn_J: I was hoping Edan could elaborate on the feeling different

Alexandre_Orion: sure ... I can go on later

;)

CryoJenX: I feel that and just takes them both as they are. All at face value, there's no dynamic, the yet implies a tug of war, or the dance if you will. The dynamics that make life possible.

Edan: I don't see them as contraries... I see them as contrasts. Iniquity is not the opposite of justice; justice occurs, but I feel the word is too broad in meaning, and too broad in application.

Contrasts as in, they overlap... an action may seem iniquitous, but also just

Alexandre_Orion: they are mutually arising

if we do not have (a concept of) Iniquity, we do not need one for Justice either

Proteus: ^^^

CryojenX nods

Alexandre_Orion: and as it were, we cannot "present" either one of them

Rosalyn_J: The concept changes depending on the conceptualiser

Alexandre_Orion: that is, I can't "show you" neither my Iniquity nor my Justice

we have symbols for both

but not definitions

that is, no definitions that englobe all possible concepts of the quality

that they are mutually arising (like high/low)

that is what is meant by "coincidentia oppositorum"

Edan is right - they are not truly "opposites"

for one extreme is a necessary condition for the existence of the other

yet

Rosalyn_J: If there is no definition of justice or iniquity or fickleness or discipline, how come so much is written about them

Alexandre_Orion: :P

CryojenX: Because not enough can ever be said to define them.

Alexandre_Orion: there's that

but like also Lao Tsu said : The tao that can be spoken is not the eternal tao ...

but

he said that

and then went on for quite a while about it

Rosalyn_J: right (irony)

Alexandre_Orion: we can explore these notions

but never really grasp them

this has what has gotten us into quite a bit of existential angst

CryojenX: Perhaps dictionaries should all come with definitions for such words that say simply "fill in the blank" ;)

Alexandre_Orion: :?

CryojenX sits down and zips her lip. O:-D

Alexandre_Orion: there are aspects of being that defy definition

we cannot even come to a clear concept of them with the conscious mind

Rosalyn_J: there is the possibility that in defining (naming) the tree, we cease to see it experience it

Alexandre_Orion: yes, but no also, Ros

when we say "tree"

you are going to picture a different sort of tree than Vicki may

but "tree" is a sign

it is not a symbol

Rosalyn_J: huh?

Alexandre_Orion: "tree" re-presents that notion -- which can be "presented"

I can show you the tree

but

Iniquity, Justice, Fickleness, Discipline ... I can't "show" you what I'm talking about so

the 'sign' - the word

is going to have an even broader spectrum of 'imagined' significance than the "tree"

do you see where I'm going with that ?

Rosalyn_J: so Iniquity etc are abstract

Alexandre_Orion: most of us will think about someone we consider immoral - or ourselves

Rosalyn_J: where as tree is concrete

Alexandre_Orion: yes

Keladry: i think those concepts are relative that's why you cannot really define them easily

Alexandre_Orion: relative to what, Keladry ?

Keladry: to the individual

each person has a nebulous definition of their own for those concepts

Alexandre_Orion: perhaps

if the person is indeed an individual

most of us are not

Keladry: their own understanding of it one that is very difficult to share or describe in a different way

how so ?

Alexandre_Orion: most of us belong to in-groups : nations, cultures, churches, other social groups

in-groups need out-groups

furthermore, we tend to consider these things according to what others think, say, do

Keladry: sometimes, but not always

Alexandre_Orion: and thus we divide up our experience of living

if individual means un-divided

then we stop qualifying as "individuals"

our lives are fractured

so,

it isn't even the concept 'relative' to the person

but 'relative' to the "piece" of the person that is in the forefront

other "pieces" will have other relativities

Keladry: idk i think each person even if they have guidelines from their community has a different understanding of concepts

Alexandre_Orion: and the poor person ends up on Prozac

CryoX: amen

Alexandre_Orion: anyway

would anyone else like to say something ?

Rosalyn_J: Um

I have a bit of a headache

Alexandre_Orion: :?

CryoJenX: I'm reminded of a song...

Alexandre_Orion: which one, Cryo ?

Edan: I'm finding it too late for me to properly explain anything I'm thinking right now

CryoJenX: It's from a metal group, Dark Castle, and is called Grasping The Awe

"Words whether they are vocalised

Into sounds or remain unspoken as thoughts

Can cast an almost hypnotic spell on you...

You can easily lose yourself in them

And can become hypnotised into implicity

Believing, that when you attach a word to something...

You know know what it is

The fact is you don't know

You have only covered up the mystery with a label

Everything, a bird, a tree, even a simple stone

And certainly a human being is ultimately unknowable...

Becoming shallow, lifeless, deadened

To life unfolding around you, within

Grasping the awe inside, around you...

When you stare at a flower or a bird let it be

Without imposing a word or label to it

A sense of awe and wonder arises within

A sense of the miraculous returns to your life
That was lost long ago...
The quicker you attach words to things, people, or situations
The more shallow and lifeless your reality becomes
And the more deadened you become to the miracle
Of life that continuously unfolds within and around you...
All we can perceive and experience is the surface
Layer of reality, less than the tip of the iceberg
Listen to silence [x2]
Words reduce reality to something the
Human mind can grasp, which isn't very much
That's it

Alexandre_Orion: That is a pretty good song for this topic, Cryo

CryoJenX: :)

Rosalyn_J: Yeah that works

it answers my question "so what?"

Keladry: that's really the total opposite of how I think about the world. I love to stare right into the heart of the mystery and try and solve it.

Proteus: I find it interesting that every experience we will ever have, contains "yet"... and that "yet" can help to reveal the limitations of the spoken word when it comes to any "set in" ideals.

Alexandre_Orion: These days ... and "these days" have been going on for about a thousand years ...

we have engaged with the iconoclasm of Reason

we want to "know"

and we hold disdain for the mystery

we have been trying to turn our symbols into signs

we want Justice to be as cut and dry as the tree

It isn't working

yes, GE ...

there is always a "yet"

not just with the spoken word, but certainly also with images

Proteus: yet presents us with the space in between everything we perceive, reminding us that it is not all there is.

Alexandre_Orion: and also that what we want (or think we want) also implies what we do not want

they are mutually arising

they are not two far apart ends of the same stick

one extreme starts becoming the other

thus : Iniquity, yet Justice

Rosalyn_J: I can see how Justice would morph

the same for iniquity

Alexandre_Orion: Haven't we all known ourselves and/or others to be so morally righteous we/they become distant and callous ?

or even judgemental ?

CryoJenX: A continuum, or spectrum

indeed

Rosalyn_J: or even the most "vile" to be a bastion of justice

Keladry: the need to be fluid not rigid

Edan: I'm sorry, I need to go to bed. Enjoy the rest of the sermon. Thank you Alex

Rosalyn_J: but what about fickleness and discipline?

Alexandre_Orion: 27

"A good traveler has no fixed plans

and is not intent upon arriving.

A good artist lets his intuition

lead him wherever it wants.

A good scientist has freed himself of concepts

and keeps his mind open to what is. Thus the Master is available to all people

and doesn't reject anyone.

He is ready to use all situations

and doesn't waste anything.

This is called embodying the light. What is a good man but a bad man's teacher?

What is a bad man but a good man's job?

If you don't understand this, you will get lost,

however intelligent you are.

It is the great secret.”

that one, Fickleness, yet Discipline is easier

there is nothing more Fickle than one who feels that their Discipline is so complete that they need no more of it

nor a higher Discipline than to recognise our own Fickleness

Discipline just means "learning"

and we are never done with that

71

“Not-knowing is true knowledge.

Presuming to know is a disease.

First realise that you are sick;

then you can move toward health. The Master is her own physician.

She has healed herself of all knowing.

Thus she is truly whole.”

Alexandre_Orion: uh-oh

CryoJenX: Much to meditate on.

Alexandre_Orion: where did everyone go ?

Rosalyn_J: Yeah

I can't even

Keladry: i'm thinking about it

Rosalyn_J: I feel an "ok" bubbling up

CryojenX: I was writing in my notebook a realisation I had

Alexandre_Orion: what was it, Cryo ?

CryojenX: My motivations for becoming Jedi largely stemmed from "spiritual pride". I wanted to know the mysteries of the Force. But knowing it's mystery, would destroy its mystery, so perhaps it is best to simply know OF the Force, that it is, and let the mystery stay.

Since truly knowing it is an impossible feat in the first place.

Proteus: but you do know it, very well... even yet that you never will.

Alexandre_Orion: or, 'know' it AS a mystery

not having to 'solve' it

we can't

CryojenX: Well put.

Keladry: just because something is impossible doesn't make the attempt not worth it

Proteus: you do know it, you just don't know that you know.

CryojenX: Sometimes, I find my entire vocabulary isn't available to me simultaneously. :D

Proteus: forest for the trees

Rosalyn_J: I'm lost

Tellahane: the symbolism and metaphors are strong with this group

Rosalyn_J: I'm more of a concrete person

Alexandre_Orion: but, Ros ... there is no concrete to be had

Rosalyn_J: well...there are some who would tend to disagree

CryojenX: Know the force only by feeling it, not by thinking it.

Keladry: there is if you consider things in terms of a frame of reference, you need a starting point

Alexandre_Orion: symbols are never adequate to re-present the transcendent

then go from allegory to symbol

but never try to bust the symbol down to a simple sign

that way, you just end up with a simulacrum

CryojenX: I'm used to many of those words being used as interchangeable, that will take some getting used to discriminating separate meanings for them

I suppose I could use a good class in semantics

Rosalyn_J: I got a lot to learn

Alexandre_Orion: Anyway ... I feel as though I'm done ...

“The Force of the Forest” - tzb

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2205-the-force-of-the-forest>

The Force is the energy which moves in all things. It sends planets around stars, pulses through electrical wires and propels each component of reality along its respective path through space and time (perhaps it is better to say it is the path). It is star and void, vortex and glacier. However whilst the Force is, in my opinion, no more "present" in certain places than others, it can be more immediately obvious or available in some settings we may encounter. We can know objectively that the busy city streets bustle with the energy of the Force, and likewise that the cold vacuum of space is exhibiting a quality of the wider Force; but for me there are few places as "Forcely" as the forest.

I recently moved to a new apartment, in a small village beside a country park - essentially an area of protected woodland. In the UK large forests are rare, at least by Northern Hemisphere standards. We are a small and densely populated island which finds its wilderness is at a high premium, constantly under threat from the encroaching need for cheaper housing and more urban space. Despite this, many Brits love the woods, spending time there each day, just walking, sitting, perhaps exercising our pets. And for me, the woods have become my primary place of refuge; my space for meditation, stillness and reflection. My place to "just be".

My temple.

Woodlands are, by nature, ruled by trees. These mighty presences illustrate the cyclical journey of life in the Force beautifully: seeds fall into fertile earth, itself the consequence of death and decomposition for countless generations gone by. If all is well germination starts, a bud grows, watered by clouds, swayed by wind, fed by sunlight. Soon a sapling

risers, sprouting supple twigs which become strong, supportive branches. These, in time, come into seed themselves, perhaps producing offspring, perhaps falling to the soil to fertilise other plants. Many seasons later, the tree itself reaches old age, or perhaps falls ill, and dies, returning to the fertile earth below a rich cocktail of nutrients and the raw building blocks of future generations.

And for that whole time, the tree is part of so many other stories. The competition of young saplings for light and water, the passing deer which threaten a young tree's very existence. The birds and insects which may nest in its branches, lichen and moss which clad the trunk and branches of the maturing tree. The creatures which live in and feed on the decomposing matter of branches, trunks and leaves. Every tree!

But the forest is not just about trees. Each animal, bird, insect, fish, every creature which chooses to live or visit. The migratory birds which may roost for a night or two on their bi-annual fly-past, travelling thousands of miles a day to stop a night... and not just mobile life, but fungi, plants, the sunlight, the wind. The Force is so available in the forest it strikes me as impossible to miss.

Perhaps that's one reason people choose to spend time in green space. The energy of grown, growing places rich with life has long been acknowledged as a calming, soothing and enriching experience. Not least because forests and woodlands are hives of life-giving oxygen, although of course this is no detriment to travellers on the brown paths of the wood. For me, those who love the woods, who know the peace beneath the swaying branches, are natural Jedi, attuned to a very clear exhibition of the Force's pervasive power.

During recent periods of stress and heartache, this availability of an immediate Forceful experience has been a tremendous solace. Taking time to "just be" in a green space has taught me many things about the true scale of my problems, the enduring stoicism which is available to me at all times, and of course the permanence and ubiquity of the Force. Around me in green tendrils, emerald shoots and rich red tree bark I find the same power which moves through me; the same eternal entity which grows the trees, moves the rivers, and sends birds fluttering through the undergrowth.

For me, the forest has become and will remain my Temple. It was built by the Force, without the intervention of human hands. It is self-sustaining, like the Force. It is filled with examples of the cyclical nature of existence, of life and death and rebirth in the Force. It is a storehouse of information, and to one ready to see it imparts knowledge, wisdom and strength. A single fallen tree tells tales greater than any saga, and each forest is therefore a library to the observant Jedi.

Every plant, tree, every leaf, every glimmer of light through the branches tells a new tale of the all-encompassing Force.

“Graceful fickleness” - TheDude

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2208-graceful-fickleness>

Let me tell you a story. Siddhartha Gautama was an Indian prince of some kind by most accounts I've read. He lived an easy life surrounded by all variations of worldly pleasures, had a wife, at least one child (some say more), and plenty of servants. But that didn't make a bit of difference to him when he saw suffering for the first time and made the decision to go become a holy man. He ditched his family and friends and any responsibility he might have had and became what we might call a beggar monk. While begging, he made a promise to the king of the city he was staying in that his city would be the first visit after he achieved enlightenment – but that wasn't the case. Siddhartha went to one yogi and mastered what he taught, then was chosen to be the yogi's successor; he refused and left. The same thing happened again with a different yogi.

Well, at some point Siddhartha sat under a tree in meditation and became enlightened and now we know him as the Buddha, or Gautama Buddha. His movement has spread all over the world. The temple we have here has been influenced by Buddha, and there are many Buddhist Jedi out there both in and outside of our temple. Yet to my knowledge none of them, or at least very few of them, will point out the Buddha jumping from tradition to tradition, abandoning his family, breaking promises and the like. We who are interested in Buddhism know the stories, we've read the speeches, but most of the time these parts of the Buddha's life are glanced over, as if those events had nothing to do with him growing as a person and possibly even contributing to his enlightenment.

Our theme as of right now is Fickleness Yet Discipline. To be fickle is to jump from one allegiance to another, and this is what we see Buddha doing before reaching enlightenment. But aren't these events of his life necessary for him to have reached his enlightenment? Sure, maybe he one day would have been enlightened if he took on the responsibility of being the successor to his first yogic teacher. Maybe not; perhaps it was the second teacher who gave him the training that he needed, or a combination of both, or maybe he learned something by chance while walking down the road after leaving the second teacher which he never referenced but had helped him immensely. These things may be true, but what we do know is that Buddha was a fickle man for a time in his life.

That is not to say that Buddha was undisciplined. No, it would be easy for a man to say “this isn't working!” after begging and return home, or to abandon the teachings of his first teacher entirely once he took on a second teacher, or to forget about them entirely, leaving them out of history. None of that would require discipline at all. But at each step, Buddha gained something. When he first witnessed suffering, he gained knowledge such as the knowledge of health and disease, life and death, happiness and suffering. For a time, he begged, and he survived; surely he learned of human kindness during that

time. I could go on and point out lessons to be learned from Buddha before enlightenment, but it's besides the point. What is important is that Siddhartha learned from these experiences and took them to heart. He didn't simply abandon post and leave everything behind; he used it as a learning experience, and though he left a few teachers and his family, he didn't lose sight of his goals or lose what he learned from them along the way. That is discipline existing alongside fickleness.

We should strive to be like Buddha in this way. I am not saying to abandon your faith, your family, your friends, your goals or anything else. Far from it! But each of us comes to a point where we move on from one experience to the next. When we move from our parents' home, when we end a relationship, when we leave one religion and adopt another, we should take those lessons we learned with us. We shouldn't abandon all that we have learned, how we have grown, or anything else. That is how we move on gracefully and become better from our experiences, no matter what they are.

No matter where you choose to go in life, may the Force be with you.

"Two Sides to Every Story - Iniquity, Yet Justice" - Senan

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2209-iniquity-yet-justice>

Two Sides to Every Story – Iniquity, yet Justice

We hear so often of absolutes; of this and that; of on and off; of one or the other. In "The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are", Alan Watts speaks of the ego's desire to categorise things into pairs. We like to think of things as "like us" and "not like us". We play a game of "Black and White". In doing so, we tend to ignore all of the empty space that is in between.

So, what does this have to do with iniquity and justice? Quite a bit, actually.

Iniquity is typically defined as immoral or grossly unfair behaviour. It is wickedness. It is often equated with "sin". It is the "evil" in the good versus evil dichotomy. Those mythological characters with questionable morality are found in the "den of iniquity". They are cloaked in darkness. Satan resides in Hell; Sauron sits atop Mount Doom of Mordor. And, of course, Darth Vader has his Death Star. Iniquity is bad. Or is it?

Set this aside for a moment as we take a closer look at justice.

Justice, on the other hand (there's that game of "Black and White" again), is fair treatment. It is impartiality. It is righteousness, or at the very least "moral rightness". Lady Justice is cloaked in white, her shining sword a beacon of light. The white knights of the Middle Ages ride mighty white steeds and ride in to defend the weak and

powerless. The white wizards stand behind them and cast spells of protection to ward off evil. They are champions, and they defend justice. Justices of modern day sit in white marble temples and determine the just treatment of those at the mercy of their gavel. Justice is good. Or is it?

Iniquity. Justice. They are not one in the same, but they are not mutually exclusive either. They are confusing; they are fluid; they are elusive. Often we find ourselves in the empty space in between. Can it be said that Adolph Hitler lived a life of absolute iniquity? Can it also be said that Mahatma Gandhi was entirely just? Perhaps each would lean more toward one side of the “iniquity, yet justice” scale, but which scale are you using? What does iniquity or justice mean to you? To me? Judging any action or individual would truly depend on one’s perspective.

There are two sides to every story.

And therein lies the rub. Iniquity is human, and it is subjective. Justice too, is a human construct and is subjective as well. Your justice is not my justice, and iniquity to me is different than what it is to you. It is even quite possible that they will overlap. Murder is iniquity, until it is justified. We do not say “Iniquity OR Justice”.

It is really all just one story. The story of US.

What does this all mean to me as a Jedi? It means that as someone who strives to be an instrument of peace, I must seek the balance. I must live in the empty space between black and white. I must be willing to flow with the Force and allow it to guide me to the proper conclusion in each new situation. I must remain focused on achieving peace. I must be patient as to not rush to judgment. I must seek knowledge so that I may better understand. I must trust in the Force to bring harmony from the chaos.

Perhaps most importantly, I need not try to be one thing or another. I must simply BE.

Thank each of you for taking a moment to reflect on this theme of Iniquity, yet Justice and for sharing your time with me. May the Force be with us all.

“Getting it right” - Akkarin

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2210-getting-it-right>

The Twelve Jedi Reflections are each assigned a month long period of intro- and outro- spection on ideals, values or issues which are not otherwise typically presented in either the training or other parts of a Jedi’s doctrine. There is a reason each term in the reflection is not presented as a perfect opposite to its pair. Not least does this allow for a more numerous number of terms we can include in the twelve member list, but the

intention was more to broaden the scope of one's reflection on any particular dichotomy for rarely are things so black and white.

But many of us yearn for a sense of self-assured knowledge of when things are unjust or immoral, we want to know when something happens if this is a good something or a bad something. We want to know that our reactions to this something are appropriate, when someone does something wrong we want to be assured that they are punished accordingly.

We want to make sure we get things right.

Of luck for this topic there has been the recent scandalous release of hacked personal data from the Ashley Madison website. For those who don't know Ashley Madison is a website one can join to organise the having of an affair with another. This might make many of you upset at the thought and maybe you think it is wrong that someone would ever conceive of doing such a thing. Indeed many have agreed with you, I saw one person post about this on Facebook saying that those people (who's data was released) deserved to get found out by their partners. Maybe they're right to lambast them.

But is this issue as clear cut as it seems? I doubt it. Sure these people cheated on their spouses and this is certainly dishonest of them, but then a very large minority of people will cheat on their spouses so maybe this is almost an expectation (if not an admitted one)? Maybe you still feel justified that these people got found out, but perhaps it is sometimes better to live the lie? After all one may have cheated only once and felt disastrous about it and never done it again, maybe that realisation helped them to appreciate what they had in their partner even more?

Was what the hackers did the Right thing to do? There have certainly been a number of couples who have begun divorce proceedings, is the breaking up of one's home-life a desirable result of their Right action? Did you know there have been suicides over this release of information? And what of those of the LGBTQ community who conceal their sexual identities and have now not only been outed as an adulterer but had their sexuality exposed too? What harm will this now cause in their social, familial and work lives?

People aren't perfect, but what these hackers did was take the choice of revealing these secrets away from the people who kept them. Keeping such secrets in the first place may not have been the Right thing to do, but as the saying goes two Wrongs do not make a Right.

And how do you make a Right? The other day I was tuning my violin and thought the process by which I settled on the right note was a rather appropriate metaphor. There is a note, the Right note, which I am trying to achieve and each pass of the bow provides me with information on how tight to make the strings, and with each tightening and each

pass the note (hopefully but not always) gets closer to the desired effect. Each alteration is small, too much and the point one is aiming for will be missed, or worse the entire string will snap.

Getting things right is much the same. If one blunders around without much care or tact then the goal one is aiming for can easily elude us, better to be supple and sympathetic to the numerous variables in a given situation. These allow us to adjust our reasons and responses, to better suit the uniqueness of the situation itself.

“Fickleness Yet Discipline” - Jeffery Williams

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2213-fickleness-yet-discipline-by-jeffery-williams>

We should all practice discipline in everything that we do, but why? Our minds tells us if it feels good do it, and do it again and again. This is why it's hard for someone to have just one cookie, we want more. And what happens if we give into our desires and do decided to keep eating?

We get out of shape, our health decreases and we find it harder to concentrate, thus dulling down the Jedi's most effective weapon, his mind. So we must discipline ourselves, our minds, we must find balance in everything we do to find peace in all we do.

Fickleness yet discipline

As we learn, as we grow, as we continue down our path our thoughts and ideas might change. As we look at worldly “truths” from other perspectives, we might see these truths as false statements. Change is good, change implies that we are in fact learning, so in this sense some fickleness is good correct?

It depends on how you define fickleness. Fickleness is in fact a word, made by humans who are known to evolve/change and also make mistakes, and since we made this word we can define it how we see fit. We can use it how we see fit.

If you believe that the universe is always seeking balance, that all things have both good and evil inside of it, why can't this be the same for our words?

If we define fickleness as - likely to change, not constant or loyal in affections. We have already stated earlier that change is good since it implies we are learning so in this sense fickleness is good. What about not being loyal in affections? That seems like a big one right? Let's look at the definition of affection - fond attachment, devotion, or love.

Attachment... Many fellow Jedi would argue that we need to strive to live without attachment, and in fact they would not be alone. This practice is not unique to the Jedi, and has been around for a much longer time in the beliefs of Hinduism.

If you will:

“When one gives up desires in his mind, is content with the self within himself, then he is said to be a man whose insight is sure.”

“Brooding about sensuous objects makes attachment to them grow; from attachment desire arises, from desire anger is born. From anger comes confusion; from confusion memory lapses; from broken memory understanding is lost; from loss of understanding, he is ruined.”

“But when a man finds delight within himself and feels inner joy and pure contentment in himself, there is nothing more to be done. He has no stake here in deeds done or undone, nor does his purpose depend on other creatures. Always perform with detachment any action you must do; performing action with detachment, one achieves supreme good.”

-Bhagavad-Gita

So if attachment is bad thus making affection bad then in a way doesn't this make fickleness good? Let's revisit this later and let's think about discipline for a second.

Discipline - activity, exercise, or a regimen that develops or improves a skill; training.

Many would argue not to give yourself to a regimen or routine because it in turns enslaves you. Let me explain, have you ever had a routine that you started but at one point simply did not want to do it? Did you do it anyways, against your will at that moment? Is this not a form of slavery in the mind?

So is discipline good? Or does it take away our freedom? Does it not keep you on “track,” even if that track means you missing out on the smaller joys in life? My point here is that these words, and there meanings can have both good and bad within them. It all depends on how we look at it. We all know that extreme case of both discipline and fickleness could be bad. However both are needed, as both yin and yang are needed. For this lesson we will be looking at an extreme form of fickleness and a balanced form of discipline.

It is important for us all to practice discipline and find balance here not because someone tells us to but because we accept it to be true with us, and we do so full heartily. In a way discipline is what the Temple was founded on. Are we not all here to improve ourselves, to master ourselves?

So the question comes up of how does someone become disciplined in something?

I have outlined some steps for us to follow:

- Set a goal
- Understand your goal
- Plan
- Action
- Reflect
- Adapt

Step one – Set a goal. What is it that you want to become disciplined in?

Step two – Understand your goal. Truly understand it, what are the reasons for your goal? Is this what you really want? How will this affect you? Meditate on this and make sure this is a path you want to take.

Step three – Plan. How do you plan on achieving your goal?

Step four – Action – Carry out your plan.

Step five – Reflect – Now that you have achieved your goal, is this truly what you wanted? How do you plan on using your new skill? Meditate on this.

Step six – Adapt – Keep your skill sharp but also adapt as you need to. If your skill is to be able to sword fight with your right hand being dominate, and you injury our hand would you give up? You would adapt to fight with your left hand being dominate.

Discipline is good, but not if it makes you cold and dead on the inside, or makes you miss out on the true joys of life.

We must be disciplined in how we discipline ourselves, keeping in mind too much of a good thing can be a bad thing.

We all have different paths here but the underline goal for many of us is the same. With this we must always seek balance in everything we do.

As I have stated above we might change but one thing does remain the same and that is who we are:

[Creed]

I leave you all with a quote:

“Perform actions, firm in discipline, relinquishing attachment; be impartial to failure and success-this equanimity is called discipline.” - Bhagavad-Gita

And a request:

To meditate on this lesson and provide me with feedback both positive but also constructive as this is my first sermon.

May the Force be with you all.

“Fickleness yet discipline” - Carlos Martinez

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2216-fickleness-yet-discipline-by-carlos>

“May the FORCE grant us all bliss and wisdom as we come together now...”

I can not tell a lie, I had to look up the word fickleness. I've never been a good reader on the fact that I learned at a much older age than most. So I grabbed a dictionary and this is what I found.

web definition: changeability -especially in regards to affection.

Oxford dictionary definition: “a lack of steadfastness, constancy or stability.”

Hmm like chaff in the wind comes to mind from my old Sunday school days.

Nothing certain. We all know what discipline is. No need to Google that one. so the question is how can we as Jedi be both? From my own life I will share. My wife has a saying for me at times, the saying is this “consistently inconsistent”. I have had this phrase whispered and stated to me many of occasions. The idea is to be what is needed. In this world we live in there is a vast amount of and please forgive my explanation but “muchness” in the world. There are times as individuals that our mind and heart and at times our very souls are being distributed in many different direction. Our children are asked to be students, kids, young adults, friends to both their own friends and to their parents. Adults are friends, confidants, lovers, lawyers, mums, dads, coaches, fans, doctors, planners, referees, beautiful, handsome and most defiantly a responsible adult. There are many different ways our attention and heart are pulled some days. every one of us who breath and live are asked to give a multiple of things at any given time. May the FORCE grant strength to those who succeed in being mom and dad as well as boss or worker! Praise to you!

It is here, insert fickleness, uncertainty and unfaithfulness of affection can be placed. Here is where we grow. Here is what I mean. Jedi Teaching #4 Jedi are weary of

attachment both material and personal Jedi Teaching #6 Jedi use their skills to the best of their ability. Jedi Teaching #7 Jedi understand their limitations. The idea is to be unattached. I am an old soldier 1998-2009 so fickleness has never been a strength. Now this may be a Sith way of thinking but it is one who finds strength in weakness that wins. "The blossom that blooms in adversity is the rarest and most beautiful of all..."

Now application: take fickleness and change it to something worth discipline. If you're having problems, take those bad feeling of fickleness and make them discipline. Change your focus. This the part in my composition notebook that this phrase is circled and repeated. CHANGE YOUR FOCUS. Take time to meditate (Jedi Teaching #2. Jedi maintain a clear mind; which can be achieved through meditation and contemplation) and find out what your focus really is. Locate it in hand, actually have a answer. This may take some time. Do not be worried if it doesn't come right away, it almost never does. If it is truly unstable and fickle, find soothing more stable.

By reviewing ourselves we are acting in a disciplined manner. By being fickle about your self and your focus you can gain better stability and learn discipline. In reality all you are doing is re evaluating your self but what happens is you create the fickleness for the instability. You change your focus from the fickle to the disciplined from the fickle. You put in practice what you desire. You take control of your own actions. You help yourself focus on better. In short you find out who you are and evaluate yourself then find what you like and don't like, remove the bad insert the good. That's the idea any way, if any one ever figured out the fool proof method to this let me be the second to know! One does not simply grab his entire life by one hand and change the course to riches and bliss overnight...puns welcome. It takes a lot of time and effort. Changing your focus is not an easy thing to do there are so many things that scream at us for our attention. Through the simple yet profound teachings we have we can change our minds, hearts and even lives...if we so choose to do so. May we pass on all we have learned! Let us be in the spirit of building up, not tearing down.

"In Defence of This Temple" - Cabur Senaar

Online at: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/sermons/2217-in-defense-of-this-temple>

Defence: To defend the way of Jediism

A Jedi is sworn by oath to defend their faith and all it encompasses.

It is the fourth of our twenty-one maxims. Please give it its due in your thinking.

So have I seen:

I love this Temple. I love it unabashedly, unapologetically. I know I am not alone. Let us be clear: The Temple is not a website. The website provides the vacant lot on which a Temple could be built. The Temple is the sum of the hearts and minds here. It's you. It's us. I learn things here that matter to me. I have friends here that I care about. When I looked for a place to hang my hat, this Temple greeted me with open arms. When I have needed support or guidance, someone here stepped up. When I have gotten away from myself, someone came along to check me. It wasn't always pleasant, but I needed it. And when I have forgotten what was important, people sent me reminders. I am grateful for all of that. The Temple has been very good to me. I try to be good for the Temple. I know I am not alone.

So, when someone comes along bringing a ruckus into my home, I cannot help but take exception to it. Yesterday, it was a guest with an ax to grind and a night with no other plans. Today, it is one of the True Jedi (*I started on my Jedi Path in 1382...*) who wants us to know that we have lost our way. Tomorrow it will be someone who treats a tragic history and a string of fresh wounds as a loaded gun, pointed at whoever shows up.

Long, angry threads abound, like a fireworks display with all the joy magically removed. Very little is more satisfying than getting in the last word, when one manages to. But, you never do, and it wouldn't help anyway. You knew that too, but that fact always seems to slip away. Whether it is about our Temple, The Jedi Path, or you personally, the attacks and counters seem to go on endlessly.

The great temptation is to meet poison with stronger poison. Would you pull the stones from our own walls to cast them at those who would see our walls fall?

We are told not to let it get under our skin, but it happens. We want to be durable, even bullet-proof, but people get to us. We're only human. We might think that, if we are proper Jedi, nothing should touch us. Still, something comes along to bite you. It happens. So then what?

We burn with anger and resentment sometimes, don't we? Certainly, but we must work to make good choices regardless. Anger might be the reason we react poorly, but it is not an excuse to stop refining ourselves. We must not let ourselves off the hook there. Truth be told, when we think we are rising to the defence of our Temple, we are often only speaking to the defence of our personal wounds. It is understandable, but not helpful. It is entirely forgivable, but we can do better.

I wish there were secret methods, but there seem to be none. There is only the work: Training and refinement of the character. It is a long, slow walk, but a one of tremendous dignity. Are you angry? Offended? I understand. It happens. Feel your emotions, but do not be blinded by them. The hand that covers your eyes is not so big. It fills your sight, feels vast only because it is so close. Practice bringing your feelings into better view, see them in context and proportions. It is a long, slow walk, this practice.

Are you angry? I understand. Now, make the responsible choice anyway. Here is the challenge I offer you: Do not defend this Temple.

“But doesn’t our Temple deserve the strongest defence?”

Yes, it does. But, Jedi, it deserves so much more.

The 12th teaching tells us that, **“Jedi believe that love and compassion are central to their lives. We must love and care for each other as we must love and care for ourselves; by doing this we envelop all life in the positivity of our actions and thoughts.”** We are taught to answer fire with water. The great temptation is to meet poison with stronger poison, but we are asked to do better.

The 16th teaching tells us that, **“We are both the witnesses and protectors of the Jedi way by the practice of our convictions.”** The practice of our convictions... This Jedi Path we share is not defended by our prowess as debaters or our willingness to split hairs for hours. Or weeks. Our anger and resentment, our venom, do not defend a Path that tells us, **“There is no Emotion, there is Peace.”** They do not defend a Path that asks us to answer hatred with love and injury with pardon. Would you pull the stones from our own walls?

Do more than merely defend this Temple. Exemplify it. Talk is cheap. Volume proves nothing. Any fool can say anything and say it loud. An example, however, is powerful. We do not defend a doctrine by violating it. This Temple deserves so much more than our tiny Crusades. What this Temple deserves, what it needs, Jedi, is many, many good examples.

Please give this its due in your thinking.

Thank you.

“When to Deliberate, When to Act” (Live Service) - Akkarin

Online at: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/sermons/2218-when-to-deliberate-when-to-act>

I was recently discussing some topics with a couple of Jedi and thing which came up was how it can be difficult to know when we should stop to deliberate our actions and, when we do, how much deliberation should be done. These considerations are important, they help inform us of the scope of the act in question, a scope which can be both vast and subtle, networked to myriad other variables and factors.

When we deliberate on something it can be easy to get caught up in the deliberations for their own sake, when we begin introducing variables into our considerations we

increase the size of the network we need to think of. But this increase in the scope of our consideration can be almost exponential, thus we become paralysed by overthinking.

Overthinking, over-deliberations, on which action to take is the same as choosing not to take any action at all. As a member of the Council I have personally experienced topics being “discussed to death” which is a drag not only on our ability to manage the Temple but a drain on one’s enthusiasm to manage it.

What can be done to prevent this over-deliberation? A Jedi should always be mindful of their actions. The 16 Teachings of our doctrine offer some thought to this: Jedi should be mindful of the context their actions arise in, the impact they will have on the future, mindful of the role our ego plays in acting them.

We must here be careful, careful not to conflate mindfulness with deliberation. They are similar and related but they are distinct. Mindfulness is a check which we can place on deliberation; when we are mindful of our action, including deliberating, we can take a step back from what we’re doing and consider the extent to which we’re deliberating and thus inform us of when we can stop and act.

Of course we shouldn’t fall into the trap of using what mindfulness has informed us of as a springboard into more discussion! The aim of deliberating an action isn’t to deliberate but to act. Mindfulness can help remind us of this aim, remind us when we begin overthinking situations, remind us to abandon our deliberations to a conclusion and act on what we’re decided.

Of course how can we know that it is the right time to conclude our discussions? Well I doubt we ever can know, there will always be more which can be said, but what we’re doing isn’t about saying, it’s about acting. If we can’t know, then we must trust ourselves in having deliberated enough to make a right call, a call which might not be perfect, but how would we ever know what was perfect?

What it possibly comes down to then is some kind of faith, patience in what we do, trusting the course of our actions, and our deliberations, trusting that we have given circumstance enough consideration, that we are mindful of the variables, but mindful too of how those variables are related to how we discuss them.

“Priesthood” (Live Service) - Edan

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2219-priesthood>

I'd like to spend a little time talking about priesthood.

If you're asking yourself what this Jedi, who is neither ordained priest nor minister, nor even in seminary, is doing talking about priesthood then you shall soon find out.

First off, I would like you to take yourself away mentally from your current surrounding, and imagine the situation as I present it.

You are in a room that is quite dark.

You strike a match and light the candles in front of you - black, red and white, the wax on the wick spits as it suddenly heats.

The incense follows after and the smokey scent of cedarwood begins to envelope the space. You speak the words of the rite you have written; slow, purposefully, in even tone. You feel the meaning of those words fill you, and you begin to feel a connection to your god. His strength becomes your strength, his wisdom becomes your wisdom. In this moment you make a connection to the divine essence and your connection to the world itself grows. A bell is rung and the ritual ends.

You are not in a church or temple, but at an altar in your living room. You are not an ordained minister or priest, you wear no special robes, and this is not your life calling. You are just you.

Priesthood is usually seen as a kind of 'life choice', a 'calling' that one has that results in them becoming a teacher, a mouthpiece for their god, a funnel for their wisdom. They administer the rites of that deity and help others find their connection to the divine. Priesthood has had various faces during history.. the modern priest is social; they tend to the spiritual health of their congregation and are often a part of different life events such as marriage; they may even listen to problems a person has, offer counselling. In Ancient Egypt, the priest was different, there was no social aspect; the priest lived in the Temple and tended only to the needs of their god. Two very different versions of a priest.

It's tempting to think sometimes that only certain people are 'made' to be priests, that you have to have some kind of calling. Another possibility is that you don't believe in god, or aren't sure... the idea of god can be a confusing one, especially when your gut tells you that gods aren't possible. It took a long while for this agnostic to come to terms with the idea of having a 'personal god'. There's a value, real value, in having a connection to a version of god even when there's no belief that they are, in essence, 'real'.

If priesthood is the means by which someone becomes a vessel for the spirit of the divine, then there is no reason why each person cannot themselves become a priest. The word worship itself comes from the Old English word 'weorthscipe' meaning the acknowledgement of worth. Worship does not have to be kneeling in a religious building and praying, it can simply be the everyday acknowledgement of the value of that divine essence that connects every one of us.

Sometimes, putting a 'face' to the Force (I use the capitalisation on purpose) can be useful, other times it may be a hindrance, it's up to the individual and the situation. I think of it a little like cloud watching.. sometimes you look up and the moisture in the air doesn't coalesce, other times you're looking it has coalesced into clouds that you can see images in. Sometimes the 'face' of the Force may need to have the face of the god of wisdom, or the face of the god of love; it doesn't mean that you've started bowing or worshipping an omnipotent figure, just that you're using a tool, imagery, to connect.

I have had a personal god in Set/Sutekh since I was a teenager. He's where I find strength when I'm struggling to feel like I fit in, who I look to for inspiration... the personification of certain qualities and behaviours manifests for me in Set. I don't believe he'll strike down my enemies or answer my prayers (if I ever did get around to praying) but I do know that I have a connection to this 'god who isn't a god'. Whenever I was taking exams, or needed to find some wisdom, the power, the energy, the Force, would form as Thoth instead, the Egyptian god of knowledge and wisdom.

When the power of the universe manifests for me as Set I am making a connection to the constructed god which represents all those qualities that I aspire to, but in reality my connection is being made with the essence of the spirit that is in every single one of us; some would call that spirit divine.

I am his priest in the same way as those ancient Egyptians were, attending to his existence and laying offerings at the feet of his statue. Except that attending to his existence means bringing down into myself his strength, and the offerings are me living the wisdom that I have come to understand. I don't need those rituals anymore, it has become an automatic thing, although ritual can be a powerful tool.

Priesthood is, in essence, the administering of the rites of one's god or gods, whether that be by ritual or service, to be a vessel of the spirit of that god, a funnel for their wisdom. What I believe is that it doesn't matter whether you believe that god is 'real' or whether he or she is your own construction; every Jedi here is a funnel of the Force.

Priesthood need not be a life's calling, but a momentary connection to the divine, the spark, the universal Force.

“Iniquity, Yet Justice” - J. K. Barger

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2200-inequity-yet-justice>

The Force is mysterious and not easy to see; Experiencing the great song of the Force as living yet unified, is the key to penetrating it's mysterious rhythm.

While some minds experience inequity, others meet justice. Ideas of 'good' or 'bad' are relative and conducive to volumes of training.

The feeling iniquity cannot be likened to feeling justice, nor can justice be likened to inequity, so where is their origin? Retrace the Path, and meditate on this.

Following such feelings through their effects and causes, a Jedi finds the Force.

Not this or that, the Force is the prime potentia of the universe- including ourselves.

Finding Justice and Iniquity in ourselves, how do we hold such a relationship? Certainly if either exists, the other is sure to follow.

If you have felt the Force to be Iniquity, you have certainly met it face to face.

If you have felt the Force to be Justice, then truly you know it.

Relieved of all preconceptions, a Jedi relies upon their greatest ally, and the Way becomes open.

Where is Justice and Iniquity then?

Feeling the Force, a Jedi moves with both while never being moved by either.

May the Force be with you...

“Fickleness, Yet Discipline” - Rugadd

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2221-fickleness-yet-discipline-by-rugadd>

When I was asked by Roz to do a sermon on this subject, I had to laugh at myself. It is almost a cosmic joke that my insight was sought for such a thing. Though I often mention my desire to be more disciplined and the activities that I take to improve that area, I think the reality of it is, I'm as fickle as they come. I often have trouble concentrating on one thing at a time, and with-out the steady hand of discipline, all sorts of things sprout and grow in the fertile soil that is my mind.

I suppose that would be the best point that I could make from my own experience. Your mind is fickle enough, but to truly master it, you exercise discipline. The idea that fickleness is a bad thing, or completely negative in every respect is one that confounds me. How can a variety of interests, found and enjoyed in the moment, be so harmful? Is not one of the main interests of our meditations to come closer to the moment, to enjoy it for what it is and what it presents? Wouldn't a fickle mind be especially well suited to handling such a world perspective? No, fickleness itself is not bad. It is the product of immersing yourself in the here and now as a character trait.

So what of discipline? Does it take the polarising stance? Is it the harmful one? We go about our day imposing our will on ourselves and our environment everyday (and night, for that matter). We cannot help it. It is part of our make-up, part of what we are. By virtue of our very existence we effect the world around us and the mind we have will work to benefit us, which in its self is a form of wild, natural discipline. Where we are able to think about more, we would bring more under the blanket of discipline. Our minds would do all the work for us if we broadened them to take in as much as possible.

We all know that what we spend our time doing, where we spend our time, and with whom, directly affects our character. It can bring out the best...or the worst. If that is true, then I suggest we use our discipline to put ourselves into environments where our fickleness will best serve us. Find the appropriate place to be in order to become the person you want to be. Associate with the people to look up to, who are wiser and more learned or more healthy. If you want money, get a job at the bank and make friends with CPA's and spend your time reading the financial papers. Plant those seeds and weed out the things that choke them away. If you want to master your body, join a gym or martial arts school and get a job that requires labor. If you want to cut back on drinking, don't keep it in the house, don't go to bars, and avoid hanging out with friends who drink excessively.

The concept is universal and everyone shares it. Your fickleness will magnify who you are and your discipline will decide what that will be. It is not about focus, it is about environment, input, and influence. Use your discipline to choose the person you want to be and let your fickleness make it so.

May the Force Be With You.

“Slay Your Dragons... Or” - Kit

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2226-slay-your-dragons-or>

Personal Dragons, or I hear them more often referred to as personal demons, are creatures that everyone has in one form or another. I'd like to introduce you to a few of mine.

The heavily barbed Anxiety, the silver scaled Fear, and vibrantly orange ADHD, are my largest. Depression is much smaller for me, but he's a wispy black thing that skimmers in unnoticed until he has enveloped me. Stress is small but when he gets his claws into my shoulders and back, he's just as hard for me to detach as the bigger guys. Naturally there are others but these are either my big dragons, or most common ones that come to visit.

We hear a lot about conquering our fears and problems. But funny thing about dragons is they always come back. You think you have ADHD all bottled up with discipline and he manages to wear a hole in the glass with his pacing alone. In my experience, they never go away. No matter how many times you plunge your sword into their hide, they heal and return. No matter how many chains you wrap around them and deny they were ever there. They still whisper, still will get a claw or wing loose, still will shake off their bonds to come sink their teeth into you when you're not looking or worse, focused on getting another back in their cage.

So, slay your dragons...or make friends with them.

A friend is someone you know. You're familiar with their attitudes, their moods, and how they interact with you. You know how to treat them, and you know what you need to do to manipulate them.

I can study all day if I keep ADHD busy and take breaks. So I either draw during a lecture or chew on something while studying. Most times I can recognise Anxiety's triggers now before she works herself into a panic. I respect Fear, but she has a habit of being a blabber mouth. Catching my attention when there isn't anything I really should be afraid of. I have to tell her that, and since she rarely listens, I keep going on with my day. Depression is a dragon I'm still working on, because I've had bigger dragons to work with. The best that I've managed to do with him is have compassion for the both of us and understand that I need some down time and a crafting project to keep me from falling more into his shadow.

Unfortunately this isn't a fix-all. Especially if your dragons are large and ever-present. It's a constant act of mindfulness and compassion for both your dragons and yourself. And thankfully, there's professional dragon tamers out there who can help in the form of psychiatrists and psychologists.

So, if you've been fighting dragons to the point that you're bone-weary, maybe try dropping that sword, spell book, or bow, take a step back, and observe. Perhaps there's a way to make friends with your dragons, and find a bit of peace in your life.

"Corruption, Yet Integrity" - Baru

Online at: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/sermons/2227-corruption-yet-integrity>

Can I be corrupted if I live in integrity with the Force? Does "guilt by association" mean that I am guilty because I am human?

I have discovered that my integrity rests in my surrender to the Force. I do my best to move with what is moving. I appreciate the ways of the Force and the designs within Nature. I find when I try to follow the "rules of man", I get lost. How do I have integrity when I am taking part in a corrupt system? Am I corrupt when taking part in corruption? Is there a way to maintain my integrity whilst working within a "man made" system that has all the flaws of our humanity?

I have found that our systems are so corrupt, that corruption has become the standard business practice. What once was considered corruption is now "how things are done".

I find that the legal system is so corrupt it does not even know that it is any more. I find that a lot of laws are passed for the purpose of making money, allowing people to get away with things, and for preventing things that people don't want to have around them. It is rumoured that big businesses and rich people encourage laws to be passed to prevent "poor people" from doing what they do all the time. I don't have specific examples at the moment, but I have read books and watched movies that talk about this. I am amazed watching movies about the legal system that shows standard operating procedure is to haggle and barter with people's lives. Some movies are: Breaker Morant, Path of Glory, Night Falls on Manhattan, and many others.

Boulder Colorado is famous for these kinds of laws. It's illegal to have a couch on your porch around campus because people burned them during the riots. Will this law change the reasons people rioted in the first place - no. Now people have to go inside their house to get a couch to burn, lol. It seemed to me that Boulder avoided that actual issue by distracting people with the new laws that they passed.

Many states have created laws that project "photoradar" even though it directly goes against our constitutional rights like - the right to face our accuser and no non-governmental third party institution can collect money for legal infractions like tickets, and more. When I tried fighting this, the head of the Boulder City Council asked me, "Do you think the head of the Justice Department would do anything unconstitutional, and

he is sitting right there?" And I replied, "Yes, because he is backing photoradar." I feel like I did my best by at least questioning their decision to allow this in Boulder.

I find that "pedophilia" is protected within the high walls of the catholic church and no one seems to be doing anything about it. There is a new movie coming about that explores this form of corruption: Spotlight.

When I was living in Ireland, I witnessed a women sneaking into England so she could have an Abortion. She had to go through this alone and quietly or the Pop could have stopped it like he did in the past.

This stuff just amazes me. And what gets me the most is these people in high positions will judge me and sentence me if I break one of their rules? It pays to be on top?

I have more examples about how the Boxing commission, FDA, Economical institutions and more are so corrupt its amazing that anything actually gets done. In so many ways, we are surrounded by it. So I ask, am I corrupt because I am a human living in this world?

I feel that I am responsible in some way. I am human. I am one with everyone on this planet. I am one with the universe. If this exists within them, it exists within in me. So I am corrupt because humanity is corrupt. I don't just get to love and cherish the good stuff about our species. I have to own it all because I am here. I have to own that in some ways I let it happen and in other ways it happens despite me.

When I explore these kinds of topics, I have found that I can get lost down the rabbit hole that simply leads to the darkness of our being and that only helps me when I can turn on the light in this darkness; and love into it. I have found the only thing I can do is save myself. I must clear my field of as much darkness and corruption as possible so there is at least one more people radiating out that possibility in the world. When more and more people take on this task of perfecting their humanity and clearing their fields, the brighter this world will become. This work of being a Jedi is an inside job. I can only save myself, I can only do this for myself, and I can do this with others on the same path. So I sit quietly in the darkness radiating my light. I trust in our ability to do good and I have faith that together we can turn this ship around.

As a human in this world, I am responsible for all things - light and dark. If feel that my role as a Jedi is to be a beacon of possibility that we can still love ourselves into the light.

I forgive myself. I am sorry for our actions. I love all of us. Thank you, for doing your best. I feel that only in my Divinity can I be integral. Only in the Force do I trust.

"Whispers" - tzb

Online at: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/sermons/2231-whispers>

The Force whispers.

Clap your hands, just once. Rest in the silence that follows. The reverberations of that single handclap echo outwards, noisily. First they reach your ears, then those of people in the next room. Maybe even the people passing in the street outside. After that, we think of the "clap" as over - gone. But the reverberations don't stop there. That initial shock-wave pushes on, well past a range we can readily detect. It whispers on, outwards, outwards, getting more subtle and indistinct, but still undeniably there. Out of our towns, our countries. Away from our planet. Every action is like this: pebbles dropped into a limitless pool, ripples flowing out from the centre, fainter and fainter as they stretch into the distance.

Likewise, strange currents and movements buffet through distant galaxies. Weird, as yet unknowable things occur on planets we're yet to discover. And the Force whispers of these things. From the mouths of billions of people. Rustling in the shifting leaves, and sighing through alternating tides. Even groaning from mountains as they crumble to dust. Beneath the noise we're used to hearing, it whispers, every moment of every day, a gentle and persistent susurrus.

But we, too are of the Force. We are filled with it, permeated by it, we move through it like fish through water, and it pulsates through every vein in our bodies. Within us it whispers on. Many of us habitually disregard thoughts or feelings deep down inside us, perhaps messages from subconscious aspects of ourselves. We discount possible insights as illusions; that is, as fantasies or anxieties, hopes, doubts, daydreams. We don't hear the closest whispers of all: the whispers within ourselves.

Our three tenets speak of focus, knowledge and wisdom. Intuition is an important source of knowledge for Jedi, but it takes a degree of focus to hear it. Intuition can scream, for example when we find ourselves in mortal danger and know nothing but "I must escape". But for the most part, intuition is quiet, only whispering. A half-seen movement. A dimly-remembered connection. An oddly familiar feeling. Our subconscious mind can pull these barely-noticeable occurrences to the forefront of our attention, but only if we're prepared to let it by quieting our thoughts, and hearing the whispers of our intuition.

Learning to listen is no great feat. Meditation is one technique which enables us to hear these whispers of the Force. Once we quiet the booming of conscious thought, we begin to hear the whisper of intuition almost by accident. If we follow it, we learn that the noisy thoughts we are used to are no more important than the whispers within us - just

louder, more "present". Intuition is strange. It feels mysterious when it arises, but that doesn't make it worthless. On the contrary, it is essential. Intuition enables us to begin learning at all. We aren't born with wisdom or knowledge, just an intuitive focus. Something inside us, whispering "listen".

But why should we listen, once we feel our conscious mind knows enough? What benefit does intuition have for full-grown Jedi? It enables us to be quicker than our thoughts. Instinct requires no conceptualisation, it just IS. It acts, and like any muscle, by exercising our instincts more, we hone them into powerful assets. We learn to perceive the world more directly, as it is rather than as we're used to seeing it. Think of it as wiping a misted window - our thoughts are a layer on top of what's actually there, and they can obscure it. Our intuition is bare, not of our making, and not ours to control. Better still, we can use our voices to amplify these intuitive whispers of the Force. Give them to others. And if we listen, if we trust our instincts, we turn our whispers into shouts.

The Force whispers within us all.

"To wake up" - Mr Bruno

Online at: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/sermons/2234-to-wake-up>

An old teacher of mine of sociology, said that the act of society we can predict some patterns of behaviour, a lot of that is due to universalisation of contemporary societies. I say this because we live in an era where not much we value physical activity, where we spent most of the time looking at the screen of our mobile phones and computers, but don't stop to observe the world around us directly; live agitated and rushed in the great metropolises of the world, living so fast that hardly see the days go by, we look often to our problems and forget that we are interconnected in this global network, where there are many who need help.

I remember that when I had first contact with the Jedi creed, I realised he talks a lot about self-giving, this focuses on altruism that we must have as Jedi. Thinking about these things this week I opened the page of our doctrine and read it with love. I ask myself: "Do you really keep all these values?" The code, creed, the 16 teachings, the 21 maxims. No, I would be hypocritical if was said that support all these values, but that's my responsibility, to reach that goal sooner or later and until then, sustain the qualities we already have with value.

How many times I and others dodged of that word? Responsibility. It's hard to be responsible, requires discipline, requires focus, requires perseverance. The question I made myself is, "as I live dodging will not live indeed. That's what I want? "We dodged to be good and courteous, we dodged to start exercising in, we dodged to share the

pain between the brothers often worrying only with our own problems. That's not how I want to live. So if it is to "wake up", it has to be now, with strength, for our lives to be better, and therefore the world.

And this contemporary chaos scenario, it is not easy to raise a flag, a way of life, an idea and live it.

Even living in different countries, we know that there is a "system" that somehow oppresses us, pressing us from all sides. You see, I work because I need money, it takes me time, so I don't exercise me, I do not help people, I do not admire the background, I do not enjoy nothing, then often I feel sad, depressed and sick; this leads me to the medical costs, the cost of living was already paid monthly, then to meet all this I have to work more and the cycle does not stop. What then is our task as Jedi, our responsibility, in my view. We have to adhere to a better way of life, more healthy, more human; in order to balance our lives, because we know the weight if we do not act, a life without health and without peace. If we cannot help us, how do we help others?

"Responsibility, yet recklessness" - Slebo

Online at: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/sermons/2235-responsibility-yet-recklessness>

Recklessness we learn as children. We climb trees and mountains and dive in the caves simply because they're there. We had done so without any regard for the moment after. Nothing was nearly as exciting as right now nor will anything ever be. As children we all truly embrace the term seize the day. So much we could learn in retrospect in a child's mind.

As the wall of extremes proceed, we grow up and learn that our recklessness have consequences and therefore we learn responsibility. Whether it is from a hospital visit, scaring those who love us, or feeling the breath of death on the back of our neck. Surviving allows is one great gift... The lessons we can carry on. Precious they are because the lesson is yours and yours alone.

This grant you the forethought of knowing the future when repeating the same actions and to pass on the lesson to those who walk the same path. Many would say, "now why would I give away my work and effort to someone else to reap the benefits?" I answer, "the most adventurous students make the finest teachers." As life lessons are passed down lives are saved and progress is made.

Stepping aside and watching mistakes be repeated when they can be easily prevented that is reckless. People will suffer in progress will fail. We want to my favourite quote, "those with the ability, have the responsibility."

As students, we also have the responsibility of learning from those mistakes of the past when they are given to us. Ignoring our teachers, that too is request because we would also hinder progress. However it is our responsibility to except the lessons, put it to work, experiment and add to it and pass it onto the future. Progress then continues for us all as a society.

In summation, we have the responsibility to learn from our mentors, because it is reckless making the same mistakes with nothing to pass on.

May the force be with you.

"Wonder" - Trisskar

Online at: <https://www.templeofthefediorder.org/sermons/2243-wonder>

"Something lost. A part of yourself, perhaps. That which you seek, inside you will find."
- Yoda

Christmas is coming! Or the Winter Solstice, Hanukkah... My dads birthday... Vacation week, Everquest 2, Loranne Makkenet & Enya mixed into the playlist and best of all? Slushies!... No I am serious. Every Christmas break before we (my husband and I) had kids, we would play Everquest or World of Warcraft for hours non stop, well past midnight and straight on to morning hours (you know...back when we had youthful energy to stay awake past 10pm). About 2 am we would give ourselves a break and walk down to the seven eleven to buy slushies. It didn't matter how freezing cold it was outside (And we live in Michigan – It gets cold)

I always loved these walk. Looked forward to them all the time. We would talk about all sorts of things. Where we were going in life? Philosophy, Martial Arts, more philosophy, work, training practices, Jedi, Martial Arts....mostly we talked about Martial Arts. It was his favourite subject, he was and still is very passionate about it and Martial Arts goes hand in hand with Philosophy which leads into Jedi perspectives when one really thinks about it. We sure did!

But that is all in the past now.

Now we have two beautiful daughters who take up a lot of our time. Husband works extra hours and comes home exhausted from both the work and the work place drama. I am most often stressed out, hey give me a break! When you have two girls so close to

the same age (4 and 5 years old) who tend to consistently fight over the same pony toy no matter all the tricks you've tried to teach them to share... you would be stressed out too. ;)

Fact is.

Life isn't as generous as it used to be. We have responsibilities now and we can't spend hours on games, and going on long walks in ice storms with kids? Not likely.

It's easy to look back and say "Man... We had it good." and "Life was so easy back then." I know that we do it often. Bemoan the fact that we can't run velkatours labyrinth, or sit in the marketplace giving everyone "Puppy Feet!" while listening to "Wild Child" cheerily singing in the background instead of:

"MooOoOoOommy!!!!"

How easy it is to look back and greedily say "Just once. Just ONCE... I would give anything to have one more Christmas Break like we used to. Feasting on junk food, slurping on slushies, and living it large together....just me and my lovie, pulling crystalline spider's and screaming 'Zone Wall! Zone Wall!!'"

But then reality sets in, instead, you scream "Where is your gorram socks!? I just put it on you two seconds ago!?" and "Why is your coat all dirty? I JUST Washed it!" as your trying to pile out the door to go shopping with only \$100 in your pocket to last you all week and that ever familiar

"MooOOOommy!!!" *CoughSniffleCough*

But then. Their eyes light up. Wide as moons.

Their jaws hang slack in silent 'Awe' ...and suddenly they excitedly chatter "Look at the lights mommy!!"

"Oooh pretty Christmas Tree!!"

"Oooo Reindeer!!"

"Presents!!!"

"Chocolate Pony!!!!" (My sick four year old has been talking about 'Chocolate Pony' for a solid week now... No idea where she got that from.)

It is truly amazing really. When you sit back and allow yourself to return to that inner child in you and see what they see. Big promotions and money scheming sales? Religious propaganda? Or just the endless beauty that brightens up the world every year. Touching the hearts and souls with a timeless tradition.

This year... My girls can express with clear words how Christmas makes them feel and it is beautiful. Truly beautiful. I am blessed that I, as a parent, That any parent, can return to their own inner child with them and remember even just for a moment that... You can allow yourself to be in Wonder.

Usually we don't do anything fancy for Christmas. A small half sized tree, some lights, a few presents... Kids rip and destroy it all down anyways.... Needless to say. This year, our little family will be getting a big and beautiful christmas tree, and we will share cookies and hot chocolate together. For, the truest gift of generosity Is that we can allow the spirit to shine as bright as the star atop your tree.

“Yes! Big eyes! Very big, because they are full... of wonder. That is my centre! It is what i was born with, eyes that only see the wonder in everything. Eyes that see light in the trees and magic in the air! It is my centre, what is yours?” — North (Rise of the Guardians).

“Three Thinkers, Three Loves” - Mr Bruno

Online at: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/sermons/2245-three-thinkers-three-loves>

It's been a while since I saw a video of a renowned professor of philosophy here in Brazil. His name is Clovis de Barros Filho and his sayings coincide with this very subject. Unfortunately I did not find any of your videos with English subtitles. At one point in his talk about the life he begins to explain about love; obviously I will not use here his words, or even say how each one must live his own life, but based on his explanation I will give my own view of the facts.

There is one feeling called love, yet many are the thinkers, ancient and contemporary that attempted to define this feeling so deep. We'll talk today three settings that will take us from greed to generosity; we must bear in mind that we do not love all people, only a few, when there is love then there is the ethics. Ethics is a tool based on love, or at least it should be, where I treat people who have no emotional ties as if I had them. To this we may give the name of generosity, where I give a little of what I have, whether physical or not, to a complete stranger. The examples are many, such as blood donation and bone marrow, money, time, attention, etc.

Surely you have turned on the generosity of love, however, how can we call love greed? If love to people and beings is generosity, love of consumer goods, the money yourself, we can call it greed. I will cite here three thinkers and idealists who have their own definitions to all this human phenomenon.

Plato in one of his letters defines love as desire, and that desire is for something that does not have, because we only want what we do not. In this love he gave a name in Greek called EROS. So I love everything that does not possess and fight to get what they crave; people, consumer goods, money, title, social status and etc. To get what is the object of his desire, I stopped to wish, as has already been achieved, then the target changes and then we want something else. It is easy to see that our society is based on EROS, I desire and fight for everything I desire and as soon as I reach I seek a new desire. So in general we work and when we can, we want other than in more money; we want a good car, when we can, we seek another better and so the cycle never stops and never ends. Perhaps in a controlled manner does not cause any problems, it is that feeling that drives us, but only he can make us sick, we will never be happy with what we have and we are always looking for the "happiness" and never find, because it will always be in front. Those who have such a strong sense can become someone greedy, it will not give up its achievements for anything, no matter who is always looking for future goals, but we know well that all this effort and commitment causes greed is install it on your heart. To get new things, after all, it needs resources and social and professional position.

Another great thinker who speaks about love is Aristotle, that tried to give another explanation to love based on their observations. For him, happiness is also based on what we also already have, to this love he gave the name of PHILIA. That's the joy for everything we have, including beyond the means and money, but also the current work, family, friends, etc. For Aristotle this was the true and genuine love; for us is a good way of thinking, taking care of everything we have, but as this is closely related to the family that does not generate certain gain, but an emotional attachment things. In some extent, it would be always happy, content and careful with our things and family being generous with only those we love; but in an uncontrolled manner, we would always conformed and accommodated with our current situation, without seeking any kind of improvement.

Finally there is a love that is explained by Jesus, that he gave the name of AGAPE, love where we diminish, we sacrifice ourselves for others. That's the kind of love that makes us be generous, often going to rescue people who have never seen in life. It's a feeling that explains and summarises the story of Jesus. Again well controlled it makes us capable of the most altruistic acts that humanity can witness and is a foundation for our way Jedi. On the other hand, excessive generosity can make us forget to protect us from people who are for some reason, abusing our kindness.

So, greed and generosity are parts of human nature and it is noticeable that our society is much more inclined to greed than generosity, so you need to exercise our generosity whenever possible, being altruistic and good people for all our around, whether known or unknown, without us forget ourselves and our wellbeing, happy with what we have and looking for something better. It's like they say, balance is the key.

“Aspire” - Zenchi

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2247-aspire>

“The life of a Jedi is no small thing... Thousands of individuals have taken the mantle as their own, not fully understanding the significance that is attached.

To be Jedi is no small task, as it is a life centred around the service of others, for it is in giving that we receive.

To be Jedi is not only about reminding ourselves to be mindful, but to resist the baleful influences within the chaotic world in which we live. And that is one of the most difficult challenges a Jedi will ever face, and sometimes, sometimes we face it alone.

Being surrounded by family and friends certainly helps enduring troubling times, but a Jedi cannot always expect to lean on others in times of turmoil. On your worst day, when no one is there to lift you from the pit of despair, will you have the faith and strength to persevere?

A Jedi should often reflect on why he or she has chosen this path, and be ever so mindful of the trials and tribulations that follow a life of service. It is far from an easy path to walk.

To Resist the hate in the world, and temper it with love. To forgive those who have wronged ourselves or others. To restore faith in a world ridden with doubt. To offer hope to those drowning in melancholy. To shine as beacons in the darkest of nights. The life of a Jedi is no small thing indeed. Courage, Compassion, Empathy, Loyalty, and Honour... These virtues we hold dearly, cherish and guide us to that which we aspire to become...

“Dreams” - Competent

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2250-dreams>

The Oxford Dictionary defines a dream as a series of thoughts, images, and sensations occurring in a person’s mind during sleep, or as contemplating the possibility of doing something. But what do these two definitions have in common?

Some may argue that dreams while we sleep correlate to our dreams while we are awake, or are depictions of the future; signs. But I am going to argue that the two definitions are very much similar in a different way.

When you sleep and have dreams, good or bad, they only happen in your head. And whether or not you believe they may become real, you can agree it happens in your

head. But isn't that the same as dreaming to one day do something? Are they not both occurrences in your head that are only to be enacted by you, the dreamer?

As a dreamer, you need to be weary that dreams are just that; dreams. Not a definite reality. One can dream to their hearts content, but that leaves nothing to be done, leaving you in the exact same place you were moments before having such dream.

To be a worthwhile dreamer; a person who's dreams come true, you also need to be a doer. You must take your dreams and use it as a blueprint for what you wish to obtain, rather than hope that your dream will mysteriously come true.

This not to say there is no use in having a dream just for the sake of dreaming now and then, but to wrap oneself in dreams that lead to nothing will result in you leading to nothing.

Achieve your dreams, freeing yourself of the constant "what if" that comes with them. Watch as everything you have imagined doing unfolds before you because you made the effort; because you chose to be a doer instead of just a dreamer.

Show the world you are extraordinary, and that you are control of your own fate, because a person with a dream is nothing more than someone who wanted to do something. Be a person who did something, because whether or not you succeed or fail, you made the effort. You fought for a better you; a better world.

That alone makes a good person, and that alone is the making of a Jedi. May The Force be with you in all of your endeavours.

"The Path and Its Nature" - Cabur Senaar

Online at: <https://www.templeofthediorder.org/sermons/2251-the-path-and-its-nature>

So have I seen:

This step, on this Path, in this moment.

That is where one's attention is best directed. Eyes held gently open, this step, here, a choice you make for the truest expression of your nature. Moment to moment, will you honour your effort and your teachers in the same breath? Will you insult your own spirit?

This step, on this Path, in this moment.

Path is what we call it. This word, so rich in history and symbolism, a bit of training and testing all on its own. It illuminates the way even as it obscures it. We must explore, and we do.

The Path leads to an evolving truth that is understood in the accumulation of steps toward it rather than by arrival. If one could be sped on their way to the End in some great leap forward, it would profit one nothing. And the point is moot, as there is no End and so, no arrival. Just the million tiny arrivals.

This step, on this Path, in this moment.

Concern yourself only with this. Do not give the End more than a passing glance, now and again. Better still, ignore it altogether. If the steps are correct, the destination takes care of itself. Never tell me where you are going. Tell me of the step you have just taken. Where did you place your feet today?

Did you triumph? Did you learn? Did you wander off? Our story takes place in all of those steps.

Fear nothing of your missteps. Any Path of consequence will not be too easy to walk. And those missteps teach us. Indeed, our mistakes are all part of it. Did you actually stray? That depends. Did you find your way back?

This step, on this Path, in this moment.

The mystery of our Path, of any Path of consequence, reveals itself in how it denies and embraces opposites. The Path is made of both choices and discoveries. We must bend ourselves to the Path, but the It bends as well. It is both uniquely yours and shared across time with those who came before and those who will come after. It is both the bedrock of your life and a complete illusion.

Let us explore.

This step...

We feel called to this, so many of us. We found an archipelago of ideas, found a name that rung with meaning to wrap them up with, and we named ourselves Jedi. That was it, more or less, wasn't it?

And we decided that we were embarking on a Path, called to it by many voices, only one of which was our own. Is the Path laid out before us? Do we carve it from virgin wilderness? Is it ever that simple?

So have I seen:

I stepped into the wild places within, but I had no idea what I would find. Did I fill it with beasts and vines? Did I create the cliffs that descend to mist? Did I make the brief glimpses of perfect sun? I do not know. They were there.

Did I choose the Path? Yes, of course. But it also chose me. And it was filled with the unknown. I discover turns and impasses that were never my preference. I chose sincerity, and sincerity forbade many options. It demanded that I face realities that offer no choice beyond the long walk forward or turning back.

I have discovered much. My Maitre has helped me reveal more. And so much lays ahead. I chose to take this Path. I never chose what was to be on it.

...On this Path...

And this thing I both created and found: it makes demands. Being true to this Path demands commitment, ethical behaviour, and great heart. I bend myself to it, away from the easy mistakes and the lies about myself and others that seduce me. It can feel unnatural, even painful, like upright posture for a spine given over to slouching. Yet...

Yet, the Path is not so straight. It does not simply begin where you started. It begins again and again, wherever you are, and snakes forward, vital as life, wending Its way through you as you make your way through It. It evolves as your understanding of what is real and true evolves, ever imperfect.

We bend ourselves in order to grow, to give ourselves to a Path that grows even as we do. We give ourselves over to sincerity, to keen observation, and we are shaped by what is shaped by our hearts.

...In this is moment...

They are my steps, my choices, my hands that part the way so I can pass. The effort is mine, is it not? And yet, every time I clear a way through, there are footprints ahead.

The ghosts of heroes leave their mark on my way.

The mountains in my way certainly did not climb themselves. The wilderness inside did not clear a trail on its own. My Maitre sent me questions. He did not send me answers. I worked hard, did I not? Did I not work hard today?

Yes. Well and good. *Don't get too excited.*

I can trace my Maitre's tracks with my fingers from memory. I can find the places where his teacher placed his feet. And others as well. My ancestors, new friends walking their own Paths, ancient teachers who never heard the word Jedi in their lives, the adversaries that teach me by showing me my limits, even the ones I will teach who I have not yet met. All of them are there to guide me. All of it is there, in the Path I carve in solitary effort.

My sleepless nights. My frustration. My tears and my struggle to keep my heart soft and my hands open. My triumphs that only expose questions that shake me to my core. I am never alone.

The ghosts of heroes leave their mark on my way. My brothers and sisters are with me. The Force is with me.

This step, on this Path, in this moment.

The years pass. The days pass. I place my feet. And none of it is real. Except that it is.

More or less.

The Path is real. It is our stories, wound together, along with the stories we have not yet set down. It is a way we make through ourselves, through the world, alone and together, and it is all an illusion.

Or a useful construct. Until it is no longer useful. Chosen and discovered, binding and bending, solitary and shared, it lives in our hearts and minds. Like anything that lives in the heart or mind, it can become a barrier.

Have I become so patient that the impatience of others unseats me? Or so open open-hearted that that mean-spirited people drive me to madness? If I am cultivating the self in order to truly express the truest version of my spirit, the Path is real enough. If I cultivate the self because I believe I am somehow broken, or to show how cultivated I am, it is barrier and distortion.

Barriers are there to be overcome and left behind. Distortions must go.

This step, on this Path, in this moment.

This endeavour of ours has great risks. Did we simply convince ourselves of a lifestyle we shaped around our prejudices and preferences, one that tells us we were right all along to feel whatever attachments and aversions that have always ruled us? Or did we pick an authority we placed over our own hearts and follow it to a dead wall? The abyss is deep.

Much is demanded of us, of our warrior's sincerity. There is a reason why some of us simply find a list of rules and run with it. It is not an altogether foolish choice. Perhaps we should all begin there. I did. It had its limits, but one begins with form to achieve a formlessness that is not simply decay and disorder.

The Path is real only insofar as it is authentic. The rest is distraction. Casting it off is your work, then. Will it be replaced with another Path? I could not tell you. If I had the answer, I would not tell you anyway, Jedi. Then you would only have another line to recite to others, a true thing you did not really understand; just more distortion and barrier.

The year passes. A new one comes. I am walking a Path through my own heart, and it defies any attempt on my part to slice it into opposites or hold it still. I can see the marks left there by all of you. Please accept my profound gratitude. You are all with me.

The Force is with us.

Thank you.

SELECTED ARTICLES

“TOTJO End of Year Report 2015” - Compiled by Jestor

Online at: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/forum/114-Announcements/114004-announcements-2015-year-end-report#229218>

2015 has come and gone... Over a month gone, at this point... I hope everyone had a good holiday, and a good start to the New Year...

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Thanks you to everyone who has made TOTJO (TotJO to some, lol I'm looking at you Akkarin... ;)...) what it is... Knights, members, and even the guests... We are getting bigger, and better... I, and others on the Council used to know everyone by name, and be able to talk to each and everyone of you... Now, as duties get greater and greater, and membership larger, it seems we have less time for the 'funner' stuff of silly conversations, and instead spend our time 'in the machine' of TOTJO... But, never let that dissuade you from reaching out to us if you have a question, comment, suggestion, or anything...:) We do take every comment under consideration, but some stay under consideration less than others... ;)

Every person here is integral to TOTJO, you all are the nuts and bolts of this virtual sanctuary, and without you, it would be 6-10 people sitting around, talking ourselves to death, lol...

We all have the power to help another, be it clicking a 'like' on the TOTJO wall, saying hello in the introductions (the MOST important job here I feel), answering new people questions (there is always someone newer than you), or, challenging someone to think harder in their beliefs, or statements...

Something that has popped up lately, I like to call "censorship versus trolling", and, as a 'spirit of the law' community, the line between them is thin...

So, when you come across a particularly difficult to understand/talk to person, what better time to use the patience a Jedi is supposed to be famous for, or to 'turn the other cheek'... Just some advice... :)

+++++

As has become our custom, and for the newer folks, this is a yearly compilation of TOTJO... Our fourth edition of this yearly report, and they still don't have anyone volunteering to do this who can make gooder sentences than me... Crazy, eh?

We try to only hit the highs, but, we can not shy away from the lows, as they are where many lessons come from, but we also do not like to dwell on them...:) (Shouldn't dwell on the good either, but I digress, ;))....

We just celebrated our 10th year, and things are just crazy at this point... Here are the past Year End Reports should you want to read them over - <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/forum/114-Announcements/109372-year-end-reports>

The new movie created a rush on us at Christmas time, and we are still seeing higher numbers than previous years... We felt the surge, but, we did not topple from the volume, lol...

New to this year, I have ask the various departments to give me some input on the Year End Report, and have spoiled each section for 'compactness', lol... Even my own, to be fair, lol... :)

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Membership Affairs - written by Jestor

With all that in mind, here are our membership numbers... We started the year with member "aikinr" #19521, and ended the year with member "Joshua Samuel" #24807, meaning 5,283 new accounts were created...

Previous years:

3472 in 2014

3363 in 2013

3842 in 2012

Around 1800 more accounts created in 2015 versus last year... I am sure that movie was a big part... On a side note, am I still the only one to not have seen it? lol...

We made some changes last year to our membership process, to newer folks, it has always been this way, but prior to July 2015, there was no '7 day wait', and on January 1 of 2015, we removed the Oath as a requirement of membership...

Announcements on TOTJO changes can be found [in the Announcements forum]. Some changes are constant, like FAQ and the IP changes, and therefore have 'stickyed' threads, others like the Application Changes are temporary, and only need one time posts... But, as always, if you have a question, please feel free to ask someone... Not me, I am just the janitor, but, someone... ;)

Point being, that due to the changes, our membership numbers are going to not be in line with previous years...

A long time ago, in a thread conversation, membership numbers were discussed and in that discussion, it was alluded to that we might do like the Catholics, and count every single person who ever made an account as a member, I am probably still registered as one (a Catholic), and I have been a PureLand Jedi for 6 years....

Well, we kinda do, not 'everyone who joined the site is a member', but rather every truthful application is... And, not showing up every day, does not mean one is not a member, some are off on their "Hero's Adventure", (hopefully) learning the "messages" they are trying to learn that the online environment cannot provide... lol... We do NOT have a total count of members, because really, that is unimportant, and your faith is only important to you... We are just here to help facilitate that... So, while we keep track to a point, yesterday's numbers really mean little... Just some facts and figures to amuse us for a minute, lol... And, site activity is fairly easy to see, lol...

And have been moving forward with that in mind... With an application and oath, you could be a member in one day, and then never return... So we included the wait, and that cut down on the 'fly-by-nighters', lol...

Now that that has been said, here are our membership numbers:

Of the 5,283 accounts: 801 membership applications (685 in 2014, 698 in 2013, 810 in 2012)

Our tighter requirements made every application turned in a member... Previous years, we would get an application or no Oath... so, for example, in 2014, of the 685 applications filled out, only 495 actually did everything correctly...

So, our membership numbers are actually double... But, as you can all see, we don't have 800+ people posting daily... Activity is another issue... :/

So, of the 801 new Members,;
90 have become Novices, of them;
6 became Initiate, of that;
2 Became Apprentice (wave to Martalina and blackdraco)

Pretty quick slim down, wasn't it? lol... Again, thank you to everyone who has made an account on the website, and we look forward to another year! Keep up the good work!

+++++

Finances - written by Jestor

We finished another year in the 'black', while not ready to build that building we all would like to see someday, being in the positive, and not asking Br. John to keep the site alive is an awesome thing... in the not-too-distant past, this was the case, Br. John

footing the bill to keep us up and running... But, thanks to the generous monetary donations, we are getting further and further from that....

So, we started the year with a balance of \$697.03 and finished up with \$789.40 after taking out for the expenses of running the site of \$565.41... Meaning that we ended on a positive note of \$92.37... Combining that, with operation costs, donations came to \$657.78 for the year!! YAY!! Go team TOTJO!!

I see many names, and some repeatedly... I, and everyone on the site who finds their way here, appreciate your donation...

We also had a first this year, Kit (formerly Kamizu) made some craft items for auction and so we created TOTJO eBay store for the purpose of an auction on those items... J_Roz (formerly Jedi_Roz), knowing her way around eBay very well, helped to set up our account, and get things listed, and keep us running smoothly there... We have some more items on the way, so keep your eyes out for that....)

Thank you to you two, and to everyone who has donated time and/or money to the operations of TOTJO... :)

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Knight Secretary (secretary to the Knights) - written by Adhara

This is the second year in which the Knights regularly came together in meetings to discuss recent topics, exchange ideas and solve problems. Most of this is 'work behind the scenes' which keeps the temple running as smoothly as it does. Critique and comments are welcome and appreciated.

We've had 6 meetings this year. The most obvious results are the changes of the Simple Oath and the Solemn Vow.

This year, 27 Novices completed the IP and earned the rank Initiate.

Of those, 18 Initiates became Apprentices

Competent Apprenticed to Darren

Atticus509 Apprenticed to tzb

r3dleader Apprenticed to Rosalyn J

Jack.Troutman Apprenticed to Reliah

Senan Apprenticed to tzb

Slebo Apprenticed to MrBruno

Rick D Apprenticed to Cabur Senar

Mael Apprenticed to Cabur Senar

blackdraco Apprenticed to LTK

Cyan Sarden Apprenticed to carlos.martinez3

The Dude Apprenticed to J.K. Barger
Xaii Apprenticed to Akkarin
Goken Apprenticed to Edan
Jeffery Williams Apprenticed to Firewolf
Loudzoo Apprenticed to Proteus
BeBe Apprenticed to Adhara
Raxicorico Apprenticed to Desolous
MrBruno Apprenticed to Rosalyn J

Furthermore the following Apprenticeships were formed:

Lightstrider Apprenticed to Edan
jontix Apprenticed to Wescli Wardest
Klyde Apprenticed to V-tog
Metsu Desal Apprenticed to Brenna
Ratcliffe Apprenticed to Adder
baru Apprenticed to RyuJin
Alastor Apprenticed to Darren

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Youth Officers - written by Edan

This year has been quite a busy one for us Youth Officers, especially in the last few months of the year.

Much of what we do goes unnoticed because it is hidden; for those who don't know under 18s have the Young Jedi League, a closed forum just for them to discuss subjects and ask questions to each other, and to us. Sometimes they might not venture out of that forum so it's nice to give them somewhere to talk comfortably.

During last year we endeavoured to both increase the participation of minors, and to put a bigger emphasis on internet safety.

Last year messages to parents and guardians were stepped up. We warn our younger members that we may do so because we generally expect that they make their parents/guardians aware they are here, but last year saw the introduction of the systematic emailing of parents and guardians. Although we do not contact them all, we now contact a much higher proportion of them in the hope that it may make both minors and their parents more aware, especially with regards to internet safety.

For this purpose, a new email account was created, youth.officer@templeofthejediorder.org If any member, minor or parent has questions or queries they

are welcome to address them to that email address.

The Youth FAQ was also redrafted to make the information within it clearer and to help better answer some of the common questions.

In November a closed Youth Group was created; because many of the younger members do not participate much in the main forum, getting information to them can be hard. Having notifications go to them directly has helped facilitate the spread of useful information. It has also had the side effect of encouraging members to talk more, which is great, although it is still in its infant stage.

At the end of December two active members of the youth forum were made 'prefects', to help Jestor and I out in pointing minors to the right places for information, and to keep a look out where ages and dates of birth were being posted. I would like to thank them both for their hard work already.

To further this, moderators and knights were all regularly reminded to keep a watch out for younger members who might need a helping hand.

Lastly, as begun in 2014, both Jestor and I have been posting discussion topics and thoughts into the Youth Forum to encourage participation. Although it is usually quite quiet as the number of younger members is much lower than the number of adults, it has brought some life and and discussion to a previously even quieter place.

I would like to thank everybody who helped make our jobs easier this year by directing minors to the right places for information, we are very grateful for your help.

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Clerical Affairs - written by Rosalyn J, Alexandre Orion and V-Tog

As of the writing of this section of the report, on 1/18/16, there have been 85 sermons given with 36 given as a part of a live service for the year 2015. We have seen considerable growth in the number of sermons as more and more people are encouraged to share their understanding of aspects of Jediism and life in general. We cannot wait to see what the nuggets of knowledge 2016 has in store for us. We thank everyone for their contribution and we look forward to seeing more and more. Special thanks to MrBruno who has been helping by reminding everyone of upcoming sermons.

In addition to the Clerical Handbook project and the Oath of Confidentiality, we have put in place an interview for seminarians having recently concluded their initial Seminary studies.

In the beginning of the year, it came to our attention that some clergy were a bit under-educated in the finer skills of compassionate communication with and about others. The following exercises were then created to inspire a more humane foundation to a minister's mode of interaction with people. These lessons were created in January, and were available as 'optional lessons' to all of our learners in the Seminary during the period from March to May, whilst they were pending Council approval. Final Council approval (vote by consent) came between 9 April and 12 May 2015. These lessons became officially part of the Seminary programme on 17 May 2015:

(Lesson VII of the programme) Empathy – from a conference based on his book “Empathy : Handbook for Revolution” given by social historian Roman Krznaric at the RSA (Royal Society for the Arts Manufacture & Commerce) on 16 February 2012.

(Lesson VIII of the programme) Vulnerability – from a conference by Brené Brown, based on her work in qualitative research in Social Work and her books “The Gifts of Imperfection” and “Daring Greatly”, before the RSA on 4 July 2013.

(Lesson IX of the programme) The Soul – also a conference at the RSA of 31 March 2014, during the course of which Dr. Iain McGilchrist (author of “The Master and His Emissary”) explores the question as to whether “the soul” has been rendered a redundant concept by modern science, or would this be a category error ?

(Lesson X of the programme) Short Essay – these are a series of six open-ended essay questions for the synthesis of the ideas in the preceding lessons.

So far, feedback from these lessons has been largely positive. These scholars from whose work the lessons are drawn explicitly raise more questions than they provide answers to, thus enticing us to explore these domains in our own lives – thus better preparing us to help others engage with such existential explorations. This is, after all, the primary mission of the Jedi Clergy.

There were six ministers licensed in 2015 :

Steamboat28 : 17 January

Cabur Senaar : 29 January

J. K. Barger : 14 February

Ratcliffe : 01 April

Rosalyn J : 01 April

MrBruno : 25 June

Of these, two have been ordained Deacon :

Rosalyn J : 06 August

Cabur Senaar : 04 December

In the year of 2015, 15 members began training in the Seminary, and a total of 24 members were actively engaged in Seminary studies (i.e. completed one or more Seminary lessons).

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Public/Media Relations - written by Akkarin

2015 has been the busiest year by far for the Public Relations and Marketing department. There have been over 100 separate inquiries this year which covers everything from professional media publications to student projects and some more personal enquiries. Of course the film has helped boost interest towards the end of the year and there is not doubt that similar boost will occur for as long as Star Wars remains in the popular imagination.

The range of media publications we've been involved with range from TV appearances, radio broadcasts and a number of online and print news articles.

The department has also been gifted with the arrival of Brenna who will assist Akkarin in running things :)

On the merchandise side of things, we've had our first fundraising auctions and Kamizu [now Kit] has set up a TotJO section on her shop for your merchandise needs :)

[See a collection of media publications at the end of the article]

Library - written by Akkarin

Not much to report for the library. A book of "extracts" from Alan Watts' The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing who you are has been added to IP lesson 2.

There is also an academic publication due out this year (it was due out last year but has been delayed) so watch for the post of when that arrives in a few months time!

There is also another book due out later this year which is an updated version of the old Way of Jediism (2010). This should be out pretty soon and currently the plan is to update it every couple of years with all the updates to our structure and procedures etc.

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For some reason, I was more disorganised than previous years... Probably because I am not used to asking for help, and I just ask each person directly what I need to know, this

year, I sent out PMs, and receive replies via PM, posts in forum, and email... lol... None of them were in the same spot... And some, like the library, had little to no movement, so they told me 'nothing to report'...

And, I forget who said what... So, NEXT year, I will have my stuff a little more organised, and this should not be such an ordeal, lol... As always, I am sure I have missed something, so I ask that you post any memories (or reports from you department heads) in this thread...

Thank you, all of you, for being you... :) And, May the Force Be With You... ;)

"TOTJO 10th Anniversary" - Neaj Pa Bol

December 25th is TotJO's Anniversary Day and 2015 marked the end of our first decade as an organisation.

Online at: <https://www.templeofthejediorder.org/component/content/article/2-uncategorised/2252-totjo-10th-anniversary>

At this time we celebrate the 10th anniversary of our Temple.

We all have our reasons why we came here, why we are here, why we are coming back. Some call it home. Some seek advice. Some give advice. Some need someone to talk to. Some enjoy the discussions. Most have friends here. I believe everyone will agree to at least one of those reason. There is one other reason, maybe the most important one: We ALL are connected by the Force.

Our connection with the Force and with each other is the foundation of this Temple. It gives us strength, hope, joy when we are weak, despaired, sad. It is a safe haven when life troubles us. It is a place to celebrate when life is joyful. All those things are important to me and I hope that together we will cherish what we have here in our Temple.

~ Opening by Adhara

Ten Years, still seems like Yesterday when I found the Temple and became not only a Charter member but a member of a community that has been growing since that first date. December 23, 2005.

I have seen this place through growing pains and all, much like a Mother sits and listens, reads, studies and then some...

Many of us are long-timers, some have gone and come back, some flitter around and make themselves known every once in a while... But, the thing that is... Is they're here.

This is Home for many that choose not to be bound by traditional Religion. The Temple provides each one of us what we seek, need and nurture as our own belief and how we get there after finding the Temple.

For me, it has been an amazing trip in this life. I've seen so much, yet So Proud to be a part of this. No matter where I am, I am not afraid to speak the words, "Yes, I belong to the Temple of the Jedi Order... It's not a fake thing or a fantasy, we believe in principles and a Doctrine of Faith." Yes, I get that look every once in a while and I laugh with them until I look back and say, "We don't wield lightsabers... that's in the movies, but, we believe in a Philosophy of our own, no different than that of any person who believes in their Religion, to do for others..." Tends to shut them down off the laughter...

Many have joined over the Years for multitudes of Reasons... Over the years we let go of the stance of Religious Jedi, such as firm terms of "Christian", "Pagan", "Spiritualist", etc., types, except for those who Chose to call themselves a "Christian Jedi" as I do. We put those confines into a placement to allow those to have a Special Interest in the association as Jedi.

We've done an amazing job in bringing Jediism to light for those seeking a clarity in life and in finding a place to call home in how one wishes to believe. Our Teaching protocols and studies have been developed and revamped as need fit to insure we give the best to those who seek that knowledge.

Being an actual Church that provides Seminary studies for those who wish to be Clergy within the Church.

Everything is centred for what we believe:

- In the Force, and in the inherent worth of all life within it.
- In the sanctity of the human person. We oppose the use of torture and cruel or unusual punishment, including the death penalty.
- In a society governed by laws grounded in reason and compassion, not in fear or prejudice.
- In a society that does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or circumstances of birth such as gender, ethnicity and national origin.
- In the ethic of reciprocity, and how moral concepts are not absolute but vary by culture, religion and over time.
- In the positive influence of spiritual growth and awareness on society.
- In the importance of freedom of conscience and self-determination within religious, political and other structures.

-
- In the separation of religion and government and the freedoms of speech, association and expression.

For The Three Tenets: Focus Knowledge Wisdom

The Jedi Code comes in two versions which are different ways of understanding the same teaching.

Emotion, yet Peace.	There is no Emotion, there is Peace.
Ignorance, yet Knowledge.	There is no Ignorance, there is Knowledge.
Passion, yet Serenity.	There is no Passion, there is Serenity.
Chaos, yet Harmony.	There is no Chaos, there is Harmony.
Death, yet the Force.	There is no Death, there is the Force.

The Creed:

I am a Jedi, an instrument of peace;
Where there is hatred I shall bring love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

I am a Jedi.

I shall never seek so much to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

The Force is with me always, for I am a Jedi.

Creed adopted from the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, author unknown, 1915.

As well as Our other teachings. There is so much we have brought forth to Make the Temple a home for many and will strive to continue in that. This is Our first Ten Years... There is so much more to come in the future and I, as well as you, Look forward to seeing what the future will Bring....

May the Force Be with You, Always and Forever....

~ Gr. Master Neaj Pa Bol

"Who Are The Jedi" - Michael Kitchen (Akkarin)

Given as a Live Service at the 2015 UK TotJO gathering, and parts of it were previously used by the BBC in their Inside Out series (March 2015).

Online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyZUjjcA6mA>

When someone calls themselves a "Jedi" what exactly do they mean by that? Who is the person who says such a thing? Who are the people who self-identify with such an idea? Who are the Jedi?

Each Jedi is a Hero in their own heroic journey, the journey of life, which is common to each and every one of us. Jedi recognise this heroic aspect to their lives, while at the same time seeing this in the lives of others. It is through understanding that individuality is shared by everyone that Jedi can begin to cultivate an empathy to the choices and circumstances, both familiar and foreign, that shape the lives of those we have not met but who's actions reverberate across our global society.

Our doctrine was not given to us by a higher power, there was no prophet who inspired us with a call to action, our teachings, our beliefs are human in origin, human in scope, and serve our shared community. Jedi have no "sins", Jedi have no blasphemy, our Heavens and our Hells are created by, and lived through, each day of our lives. We believe in a just and fair society in which the freedoms of speech, association and expression are respected by an acceptance of those differences which so often lead to hurtful prejudice.

So the Jedi are just people, people like any other, we go to work, go to school, look after our children, pursue hobbies, enjoy time with our partners and with our friends, experiencing all the joys and hardships such activities involve.

Jedi are people who realise that belief must be followed by action, our training, our code of ethics, our teachings, they are practical as much as they are philosophical and spiritual. With courage, with determination, with effort, we can make the world a more compassionate place.

Jedi are people who look beyond immediate, who look deeper than the surface, who don't take for granted what is “common-sense”, what is immediately obvious. Our everyday existence teaches us that we are separate, but our belief in the Force teaches us to take a broader view; what is an individual without a society? What is a human without an environment? Is it our similarities that are so trivial? Or our differences? Understanding creates empathy creates harmony.

Perhaps most important of all however is the reminder that we are practising Jedi, not perfect Jedi. We will make mistakes, we will fall short of our expectations, we will sometimes fail, but such is the course of life. Our highest virtue is our human-heartedness. We all have our dragons, and not all perhaps can be slain, but we can learn to tame them, to teach them not to rear their uncomfortable heads, these are challenges you can overcome.

To do the best we can with the time we have is the mark of a Jedi. And if such things seem familiar then it is because the story of the Jedi is the story of experiencing life.

May the Force be with you, Always.

“La Voie du Jedi” - Alexandre Orion

This article was written for the November-December issue of the French “Rebelles” magazine.

La communauté Jedi vit le jour sous ce nom parmi la génération qui eut pu témoigner l'adresse par laquelle la représentation du Chevalier Jedi toucha cette sensibilité humaine : l'archétype du héros. Sans connaissance approfondie de ses fondements dans la mythologie héroïque et cosmogonique – encore moins la psychologie archétypale – nombreuses personnes eurent le rêve de vivre au quotidien la vie d'un Chevalier Jedi.

Avec l'avènement de la télécommunication planétaire par l'intermédiaire de l'Internet des personnes ayant des visions semblables se connectèrent pour propulser les communautés Jedi dans un état de croissance fulgurante. Or, pendant ce temps, nous vîmes un nombre de groupes se former et se dissoudre. La formation est toujours la même : on se connecte aux autres qui ont plus ou moins la même vision, en créant un groupe – un espace pour discussions, pour croissance personnelle et pour camaraderie, un « chez nous » – qui se charge de passer à d'autres personnes la Voie du Jedi. La disparition des groupes a aussi tendance à être due aux mêmes causes : les membres fondateurs sont jeunes et ne connaissent pas bien la dure réalité d'une gestion administrative. L'enthousiasme fane tandis que le fardeau du leadership s'alourdit ; la vision du départ succombe aux pièges tels que la délégation des tâches administratives

et/ou la modération du site. Enfin, toute la joie qu'on eut auparavant dans les discussions et d'autres échanges tombe en arrière-plan et l'on ne peut plus se réjouir de son propre réseau social.

La plupart des groupes de la communauté Jedi fonctionnent de la même manière, par des degrés d'entraînement en développement personnel. Chaque groupe a conçu ses procédés selon son focus et sa propre vision des idéaux Jedi. Au fond, il y a plus de similitudes que de véritable différences irréconciliables. Comme dans n'importe quelle initiation, on commence par des études de base. Au Temple de l'Ordre Jedi (où je suis), le Programme d'Initiation débute par 'La Puissance du mythe' de J. Campbell, 'The Book' d'Alan Watts, un module sur la méditation (Alan Watts ou bien Krishnamurti), puis un regard sur l'inter-connectivité des systèmes vivants (F. Capra). Ensuite, on engage la doctrine de l'Ordre, suivi par un survol des grandes traditions religieuses du monde. Après une petite révision de la diplomatie ainsi que la dialectique hégélienne, on invite l'initié à explorer une variété de thèmes dans des courts essais en tant qu'un aperçu de son caractère et sa manière de réfléchir. Tout le monde tient un journal, un cahier sur le forum, dans lequel il affiche son travail. C'est en le lisant, qu'un maître enseignant reconnaît s'il pourrait entretenir une relation maître/apprenti avec cet initié.

Ce serait compliqué de décrire un apprentissage typique. L'apprentissage est une relation d'échange particulière entre l'apprenti et son mentor ; normalement, les leçons dispensées sont celles dont l'apprenti a besoin pour surmonter des obstacles personnelles. Chaque leçon porte une valeur en 'points' cependant, cette mesure est pour assurer l'équité des apprentissages (qu'ils accomplissent approximativement le même nombre de leçons) malgré les pédagogies différentes des mentors. Dans les meilleurs des cas, l'apprentissage aboutit en adoubement au grade de Chevalier Jedi.

Les valeurs spirituelles varient aussi, non seulement entre les groupes divers, mais de Jedi au Jedi. La Force ne peut être ni définie, ni décrite, ni suivie comme l'on pourrait suivre une méthode ou une règle ... La Force est en ce moment présent – ni dans le passé, ni dans l'avenir –, comme in illo tempore (mythe), dynamique, éternelle ... sa vérité donc ne peut s'inscrire dans un texte quelconque (de signes au lieu de symboles). Ainsi ne devrait-on jamais prescrire une doctrine très élaborée. Les symboles existent depuis longtemps, on n'a qu'à les mettre à jour.

Il serait difficile de parler d'une manière exacte de l'implantation ou dans les pays anglo-saxons, ou dans le monde entier. Comme illustré auparavant, les groupes dont se compose la communauté Jedi se sont répandues à l'aide des avancées en télécommunications. Ainsi y trouve-t-on les inscrits aux forums en-ligne des membres de partout dans le monde. Ces personnes ont beau s'identifier à l'image du Chevalier Jedi aux degrés bien différents, l'archétype du héros s'adapte à plusieurs incarnations.

En somme, quelle que soit sa culture d'origine, tout le monde peut trouver sa place parmi les Jedi.

Il n'y a pas de profil 'type' d'un Jedi, sauf en ce qui concerne une sensibilité de la Force. C'est à dire, le Jedi croit :

- En la Force, et en la valeur inhérente de toute Vie.
- En la sacro-sainteté de la être humaine. Nous nous opposons à l'emploi de la torture et aux punitions cruelles inadaptées, y compris la peine de mort.
- En une société régie par lois fondées sur la raison et la compassion, et non sur la peur et la préjudice.
- En une société qui ne laisse aucune place à la discrimination sur la base d'orientation sexuelle, ou des circonstances de naissance telles que le sexe, l'appartenance ethnique ou le pays d'origine.

(de notre page d'accueil)

Depuis décembre 2013, j'occupe l'office du Pasteur du TotJO. En bref, mes responsabilités sont de maintenir l'équilibre spirituel des membres et de la collectivité à travers des sermons, l'instruction du clergé et une disponibilité aux membres ayant besoin de conseil. Ma fonction exige aussi que je siège le Conseil du TotJO (côté administrateur).

Quant à ma pratique, il n'y a rien d'impressionnant. Vivre dans la Force n'est nullement différent de la Vie de tous les jours. Peut-être est-ce un peu plus léger. Vivre sur la Voie du Jedi ne soulève personne de la condition humaine. En revanche, suivre comme on peut la Voie pourrait rendre la condition humaine bien moins pénible. Je pratique la méditation pleine conscience, un peu de Hatha yoga, m'entretenir le physique dans une salle et ma lecture consiste en Jung, Eliade, Durand ainsi que Alain de Botton, Brené Brown, Martha Nussbaum, Mary Midgley &c. Par ailleurs, je travaille (fonctionnariat), fais des courses, sors avec mes amis ... la vie de tous les jours. Il n'y a pas de distinction entre la vie spirituelle et la vie profane chez le Jedi.

“Syncretism” - Alexandre Orion

This article is in the seminary as part of the clerical training.

We often speak of a syncretic religion as a meeting space wherein everyone can enjoy the religion of their choosing and everyone just gets on well. That isn't precisely it. That, different religious beliefs and practices cohabitating is simply religious toleration, as that which was first advocated by John Locke in the 17th century. This was further put forth

by Roger Williams who was steadfastly opposed to the systematic 'conversion' of Native Americans to Christianity (or something that resembled it).

Religious toleration (or tolerance) is a very, very good start, but it certainly doesn't stop there. We must be tolerant, then accepting of others' beliefs and convictions. Divergent perspectives are good ; they would best never be the basis for conflict. But this is not the same as syncretism.

Syncretism is the result of two or more modes of belief, of culture, of thought or of education that come together. It can come about by different means, either by groups of one persuasion fostering relations with another and thereby exchanging more than simply commerce or combat, or by directly fusing customs to make those relations more harmonious more easily.

All religions are syncretic, even the ones we call traditional. Of the three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism was influenced by the religions from the Egyptian mystery schools through the Greek and Roman pantheons, the immediate ancestors of Abraham were themselves polytheistic. With the rise of Christianity from the Judaic messianic prophecies, we witness therein too the absorption of many of the Roman and pagan traditions, from the on-set, yet certainly also later as conversion was more "actively" pursued. And in the East, Buddhism grew out of the various practices of Brahmanism, which upon encounter with Confucianism, Taoism and Shinto inspired Zen. More closely to our own times, the syncretism of divergent beliefs continues to occur.

The late Professor Ninian Smart wrote in his analytic compendium of religions, *The Religious Experience* : "where religions come into contact, there is a tendency toward syncretism. Often this leads to the creation of a third religion, claiming to be inclusive, but in fact separated from the traditional faiths it is supposed to include." (Smart, 1996, p.15) Examples in Christianity, he cites, are the Church of the Latter Day Saints, the Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Science. Other examples of syncretic movements in Asia are Buddhism and Confucianism to produce Ch'an (Zen), and Buddhism incorporating Buddhist and Shinto practices (ibid).

Therefore, when we come to understand that ours, Jediism, is a 'syncretic' religion, it is not simply to say that we exercise religious toleration, though we indeed do. Nor is the Jedi religion truly a smorgas-religion or a pot luck of faiths where everyone put a plate of 'belief' or a platter of 'ritual' on the buffet and everyone makes a plate-ful of what one 'likes'. That would not be syncretic: that would be spiritual indigestion. What we mean by Jediism as syncretic is that it is coming into its own as a coherent belief system, a distinct entity unto itself.

For any religion, there must be a mythological basis. Mythological stories are not to be taken as true with regard to their details, characters or the exploits revealed therein; they

provide a reference for the subconscious, an instruction manual so to speak, for each phase of Life, for interacting with one another and the environment in many different kinds of situations. By these stories we mould our psyche and witness how the processes of the World build History and shape our individual and collective rôles in it. Re-enactment of myth during rituals, rites, ceremonies &c permit us to participate in something much larger than our ordinary Life experiences, something transcendent and other-worldly, which connects to a level of our consciousness which goes beyond the casual rôles we occupy. These myths are the sign posts posed and followed by all those generations that have come this way before. These rôles change from event to event and over time. Myths help us to adapt, to change and to age.

Syncretism then is the correlation of the alike or collaborative elements of diverse mythologies. Therefore, the place of Jediism in the chronicle of World Religious History is a particularly interesting one. As Joseph Campbell pointed out in the “Power of Myth” interviews with the journalist Bill Moyers: “You can't predict what a myth is going to be any more than you can predict what you're going to dream tonight. Myths and dreams come from the same place. They come from realisations of some kind that have then to find expression in symbolic form. And the only myth that is going to be worth thinking about in the immediate future is one that is talking about the planet, not the city, not these people, but the planet, and everybody on it. That's my main thought for what the future myth is going to be.”

And this is where we find ourselves. The Temple of the Jedi Order is a World organisation; we represent many countries, cultures, religions and socio-economic classes. Our membership is an eclectic group who have come together in exploration of that broad-based mythic dimension that our post-modern, multi-media, global connexion which our planetary society has evolved into. The entire Earth is one community now, with common aspirations and common global crises, and so likewise our religious dimensions must accommodate the realisations that are coming to us in this new (relatively) climate. Syncretism is not something that we choose to ‘do.’ It just happens where beliefs meet.

What Jediism does is give all the World’s beliefs, myths and traditions a meeting place out of which will emerge that myth for the planet. Therefore, as the Jedi Ministers of the Force – which we do not anthropomorphise – we need to recognise the processes of syncretism:

“CAMPBELL: That's right. You've got the same body, with the same organs and energies, that Cro-Magnon man had thirty thousand years ago. Living a human life in New York City or living a human life in the caves, you go through the same stages of childhood, coming to sexual maturity, transformation of the dependency of childhood into the responsibility of manhood or womanhood, marriage, then failure of the body,

gradual loss of its powers, and death. You have the same body, the same bodily experiences, and so you respond to the same images. For example, a constant image is that of the conflict of the eagle and the serpent. The serpent bound to the earth, the eagle in spiritual flight -- isn't that conflict something we all experience? And then, when the two amalgamate, we get a wonderful dragon, a serpent with wings. All over the earth people recognise these images. Whether I'm reading Polynesian or Iroquois or Egyptian myths, the images are the same, and they are talking about the same problems." (J. Campbell, B. Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, p. 40)

It occurs from time to time that we are brought to talk about how we came to find our Temple, from what religious background – or lack thereof – and what discoveries we have made all along the route. We mention what we found fulfilling, but most often what we seek still. Rarely though do we ever consider “why” were we looking up Jedi in the first place ? “Why” are we even seeking what we haven’t found ?

It is basically because we have to...

Contemporary stories, whether film, television or print, carry on the mythic stories in this age where Culture has attempted to replace Religion(s) as the vehicle of our existential exploration. ‘Star Wars’, ‘Harry Potter’ & ‘The Lord of the Rings’ have done much more than entertain us, they have presented us the classic myths in fresh ways, adapted to our time and the people we have become now. The stories are modernised, we can better identify with the characters and events therein but the myths are quite the same...

It would be useless to approach the question of “what” it is we search, for the mysteries of our lives cannot be ‘known’ in our ordinary way of ‘knowing’ things. It is this transcendent mystery of Life that we seek an answer to, despite our dis-belief, our reason and/or our pragmatism, for it remains inconceivable in the terminology that encapsulates our understanding. We have no other way of thinking but in terms of dualities – this/not this, this/that, Self/Other – but the transcendent ground of being exceeds all our ideas, concepts and philosophies for it is not ‘dual’.

Thus, regardless of our conviction in whatever faith – or lack thereof – when we meet others, there is something of that search for the transcendent that carries across. Regardless of our religion, culture or education, we are all human beings going through the experience of being alive.

It is for this reason that we begin our Initiation into Jediism by exploring the myths that have symbolised the passages of Man through the ages and through the landscapes of Consciousness. These myths show commonalities because our lives share commonalities. By way of these, when beliefs come together, they syncretise. As ministers of the ‘Force’, we practice our calling in the service of people through the foundation on which diverse traditions arise. Yet, as the foundation remains the same, it

is beneficial to the Jedi Minister to understand basic syncretism. With this understanding, one can offer a greater service to a more diverse community, clearing the interference of the details of many beliefs in order to function effectively at the source of belief itself...

“Beyond Tolerance” - Akkarin

This article was written for the Jedi Compass Book Project.

Tolerance is an odd virtue to value oneself as having. Tolerance would seem on the surface to be a worthy and valuable trait, but once you begin digging you realise that actually tolerance isn't enough for a Jedi. Tolerance has the pretence of being good while deep down breeding negativity and animosity. The question I wish you, dear reader, to consider is whether we should ever settle for “tolerating” something.

Tolerate: ‘Allow the existence, occurrence, or practice of (something that one dislikes or disagrees with) without interference’.

Tolerating something means ultimately that, on some level, you disagree with that something. This bottom-line disagreement becomes a problem because it can give rise to resentment and tension in a relationship, whether that relationship is between you and a partner, an employee and an employer, or a dominant ethnic group and a minor ethnic group.

If you see something that you disapprove of you might think it polite not to confront the people doing it, deciding instead to tolerate their activities while you remain silently displeased. But what is not spoken can be just as detrimental mentally and spiritually as what is spoken, because the feelings of displeasure or annoyance or anger remain. These feelings bubble inside us like a resentment-fuelled steam gauge until a valve suddenly blows and our efforts at “tolerating” these irritable practices/behaviours fail, erupting in a torrent of emotion.

These torrents of emotion could be “external” in the form of causing harm to another (most likely the person you were trying to “tolerate”), or they might be “internal” in the form of a mental breakdown. Perhaps this build-up of tension-steam will add to other pressures already being felt and something else will “snap”, something unrelated to tolerance, the pressures of Life might get too much for someone if they feel overwhelmed. There are many different ways that this might happen and by no means are they all extreme and violent, but the result will leave you or another damaged mentally and spiritually, perhaps even physically in some extreme cases.

So if tolerance is not what we should be aiming for then what exactly would be a good alternative? What should a Jedi be striving for instead?

A Jedi should be striving for Acceptance. Acceptance is very similar to tolerance with one crucial difference, when one “accepts” something they do so without the dislike or the disdain. This can be achieved through empathetic understanding, and learning not to automatically consider the “other” as hostile.

A careful note must be made on the nature of the “acceptance” I am speaking of; acceptance must not be mistaken for resignation or apathy in this context. Acceptance is not simply saying “Oh well that’s just the way things are, I accept the situation”, the acceptance I speak of is very much about actively engaging with your environment by searching for connections that bring us closer together rather than farther apart. Similarly “acceptance” should not be mistaken for “agreement”; one does not have to agree with something to understand or study that something. Acceptance is not going to automatically fix every disagreement between parties, but what it is going to do is allow those parties to better empathise with each other rather than simply thinking that the “other” is “wrong” plain and simple. Thinking that they are just “wrong” is **definitely** not going to help fix disagreements between parties!

The human reaction is to focus on the differences between things, but acceptance requires the opposite, acceptance requires a focus on the similarities between things. If we learn to focus on the things we have in common rather than fixate on the things that are different and undesirable then our mind will begin letting go of the negativity of whatever it was we disagree with and we will feel less resentment.

Acceptance asks the same questions as Tolerance “Why aren’t they the same as me?”, “Why are they doing things differently than me?”, “Why don’t they want to do things the way I do them?” but acceptance recognises each person as an equal individual on Joseph Campbell’s “Hero’s Journey”. We are all individuals just trying to find our way in life. If someone else belongs to a different religion than you, prescribes to a different philosophy than you, or behaves different than you, acceptance requires that we do not simply dismiss these differences as somehow being hostile or offensive, you do not scoff at the person thinking that they cannot see the “superiority” of your position.

As Jedi we value the cultivation of knowledge, particularly self-knowledge, and the proper application of knowledge in the form of wisdom. Self-knowledge is important in ensuring that we maintain our commitments to the various ideals of the Jedi path and this knowledge requires persistent and thorough introspection into our motives and reasons. By recognising deep down that we are all just people trying to fulfil our human needs we begin asking ourselves what do other people find valuable in what they believe/do; doubtless other people have arrived at their conclusions with the same enthusiasm and conviction that we have arrived at ours. Even though other people have

been moulded and shaped by their different cultures and different environments we are all more or less the same, we are all fundamentally Human. Because of this fundamental similarity we are required to examine these differences in belief and ideals by asking ourselves why we do not agree with them. Understanding why one does not agree requires introspection and this introspection into our own beliefs and ideals ensures that they are under constant scrutiny which helps keep us mentally and spiritually healthy.

Roman Krznaric, a philosopher and author, coined the term “outrospection” which is an important counterpart to “introspection”. As introspection is the examination of one’s thoughts, outrospection is the examination of another’s thoughts. In the context of acceptance the examination of their thoughts is into their beliefs, their ideals and their reasons for both. When introspection is done in response to coming into contact with the beliefs of others outrospection is also needed. An object or idea can be defined as much by what it is as by what it is not. And once we begin to understand them as we understand ourselves we begin to empathise with them, we begin to accept them for who they are. This empathy helps remove the tension that can be brought about through disdain.

Tolerance is a type of control, a control of your emotional responses, and learning how to control your emotional responses is crucial if you wish to learn how to build a calm and composed character. Control requires that we keep the ego in check as best we can. Acceptance on the other hand is not a type of control; acceptance is a type of meditation, a conscious state of deep mental empathetic awareness about the similarities and connections between each of us. If we are all One within the Force then understanding that which we share will bring us closer to this realisation and all the compassionate wisdom this entails.

As Jedi our lives are spent in service to others by our search for compassion and mutual understanding; accepting others by recognising what connects us rather than what separates us is a valuable way of fulfilling our oaths of service. All this being said it is entirely reasonable to expect that one is not going to simply jump from not accepting something to all of a sudden accepting it wholeheartedly. We do not have to make a single jump, we can make several smaller steps and tolerance is a good first step in trying to get along! But as Jedi we should not stop there, we should take those other steps towards acceptance. A jump is desirable but unrealistic, we are not perfect, we are Jedi, and we are Human.

MEDIA PUBLICATIONS

Here in chronological order (January – December) is a number of news stories published in the media about or by members of the Temple and the broader community:

March:

<http://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/Jedism-just-Star-Wars-fan-says-Saffron-Walden/story-26232099-detail/story.html>

May:

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/thethinkingatheist/2015/06/09/jediism-and-the-religions-of-film-1>

June:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emPkkwf-a3Y>

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/thethinkingatheist/2015/06/09/jediism-and-the-religions-of-film-1>

July:

<http://www.vice.com/fr/read/le-retour-du-jediisme-891>

August:

<http://www.bienpublic.com/edition-dijon-ville/2015/08/20/un-maitre-jedi-a-dijon>

September:

<http://www.prosieben.de/tv/galileo/videos/2015343-religion-jedi-diese-leute-nehmen-star-wars-wirklich-ernst-clip>

<http://www.elmundo.es/papel/historias/2015/12/11/566ab50622601dc1038b45ad.html>

October:

<http://www.bigissue.com/features/6072/how-do-jedi-celebrate-christmas>

December:

<http://www.lm-magazine.com/blog/2015/12/01/alexandre-orion/>

<http://www.beaumontenterprise.com/news/article/Beaumont-man-embraces-Jedi-lifestyle-6704867.php#photo-9125159>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmyQkc9I9h4>

<http://www.bigissue.com/features/6072/how-do-jedi-celebrate-christmas>

<http://www.elmundo.es/papel/historias/2015/12/11/566ab50622601dc1038b45ad.html>

<http://www.prosieben.de/tv/galileo/videos/2015343-religion-jedi-diese-leute-nehmen-star-wars-wirklich-ernst-clip>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emPkkwf-a3Y>

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/weddings/75249092/Meet-the-Kiwi-with-a-Jedi-romance-that-rivals-Princess-Leia-and-Han-Solo>

<http://www.guidelive.com/star-wars/2015/12/16/real-life-jedis-worship-force-probably-think>

http://lancasteronline.com/features/faith_values/the-spirituality-of-star-wars/article_7b01cc44-a027-11e5-acc4-a7765b7fb4ec.html